

BOOK III. adorned with gorgeous attire, or maketh costly buildings
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to spring up out of the earth for them: so I trust that to mention what the Scripture of God leaveth unto the Church's discretion in some things, is not in any thing to impair the honour which the Church of God yieldeth to the sacred Scripture's perfection. Wherein seeing that no more is by us maintained, than only that Scripture must needs teach the Church whatsoever is in such sort necessary as hath been set down; and that it is no more disgrace for Scripture to have left a number of other things free to be ordered at the discretion of the Church, than for nature to have left it unto the wit of man to devise his own attire, and not to look for it as the beasts of the field have theirs: if neither this can import, nor any other proof sufficient be brought forth, that we either will at any time or ever did affirm the sacred Scripture to comprehend no more than only those bare necessities; if we acknowledge that as well for particular application to special occasions, as also in other manifold respects, infinite treasures of wisdom are over and besides abundantly to be found in the Holy Scripture; yea, that scarcely there is any noble part of knowledge, worthy the mind of man, but from thence it may have some direction and light; yea, that although there be no necessity it should of purpose prescribe any one particular form of church government, yet touching the manner of governing in general the precepts that Scripture setteth down are not few, and the examples many which it proposeth for all church governors even in particularities to follow; yea, that those things finally which are of principal weight in the very particular form of church polity (although not that form which they imagine, but that which we against them uphold) are in the selfsame Scriptures contained: if all this be willingly granted by us which are accused "to pin the word of God in so narrow room, "as that it should be able to direct us but in principal points of "our religion; or as though the substance of religion or some "rude and unfashioned matter of building the Church were "uttered in them, and those things left out that should pertain "to the form and fashion of it;" let the cause of the accused be referred to the accusers' own conscience, and let that judge whether this accusation be deserved where it hath been laid.

V. But so easy it is for every man living to err, and BOOK III.
so hard to wrest from any man's mouth the plain acknow- Ch. v. 1.
ledgment of error, that what hath been once inconsiderately defended, the same is commonly persisted in, as long as wit by whetting itself is able to find out any shift, be it never so slight, whereby to escape out of the hands of present contradiction. So that it cometh herein to pass with men unadvisedly fallen into error, as with them whose state hath no ground to uphold it, but only the help which by subtle conveyance they draw out of casual events arising from day to day, till at length they be clean spent. They which first gave out, that "nothing ought to be established in the "Church which is not commanded by the word of God," thought this principle plainly warranted by the manifest words of the Law¹, "Ye shall put nothing unto the word "which I command you, neither shall you take aught there- "from, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord "your God, which I command you." Wherefore having an eye to a number of rites and orders in the Church of England, as marrying with a ring, crossing in the one sacrament, kneeling at the other, observing of festival days moe than only that which is called the Lord's day, enjoining abstinence at certain times from some kinds of meat, churching of women after childbirth, degrees taken by divines in universities, sundry church offices, dignities, and callings, for which they found no commandment in the Holy Scripture, they thought by the one only stroke of that axiom to have cut them off. But that which they took for an oracle being sifted was repelled. True it is concerning the word of God, whether it be by misconstruction of the sense or by falsification of the words, wittingly to endeavour that any thing may seem divine which is not, or any thing not seem which is, were plainly to abuse, and even to falsify divine evidence; which injury offered but unto men, is most worthily counted heinous. Which point I wish they did well observe, with whom nothing is more familiar than to plead in these causes, "the law of "God," "the word of the Lord;" who notwithstanding when

¹ "Whatsoever I command you, and xii. 32. [Adm. p. 3. See also "take heed you do it. Thou shalt Answ. 59, 60, 61. T. C. i. 21, 22. "put nothing thereto, nor take Eccl. Disc. fol. 5.] "aught therefrom." Deut. iv. 2.

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Their meaning who first did plead against the Polity of the Church of England, urging that "nothing ought to be established in the Church which is not commanded by the word of God," "which is not commanded by the word of God," and what Scripture they thought they might ground this assertion upon.

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they come to allege what word and what law they mean, their common ordinary practice is to quote by-speeches in some historical narration or other, and to urge them as if they were written in most exact form of law. What is to add to the law of God if this be not? When that which the word of God doth but deliver historically, we construe¹ without any warrant as if it were legally meant, and so urge it further than we can prove that it was intended; do we not add to the laws of God, and make them in number seem more than they are? It standeth us upon to be careful in this case. For the sentence of God is heavy against them that wittingly shall presume thus to use the Scripture².

The same
assertion
we cannot
hold with-
out doing
wrong
unto all
Churches.

VI. But let that which they do hereby intend be granted them; let it once stand as consonant to reason, that because we are forbidden to add to the law of God any thing, or to take aught from it, therefore we may not for matters of the Church make any law more than is already set down in Scripture: who seeth not what sentence it shall enforce us to give against all Churches in the world, inasmuch as there is not one, but hath had many things established in it, which though the Scripture did never command, yet for us to condemn were rashness? Let the Church of God even in the time of our Saviour Christ serve for example unto all the rest. In their domestical celebration of the passover, which supper they divided (as it were) into two courses; what Scripture did give commandment that between the first and the second he that was chief should put off the residue of his garments, and keeping on his feast-robe³ only wash the feet of them that were with him? What Scripture did command them never to lift up their hands unwashed in prayer unto God? which custom Aristeas (be the credit of the author more or less) sheweth wherefore they did so religiously observe⁴. What Scripture did command the Jews every festival-day to fast till the sixth hour? the custom both

¹ ["conster," and so viii. 1. IV. xi. 7. and elsewhere, 1st ed. but not uniformly.] 1886.

² [Rev. xxii. 18.]

³ John xiii. Cœnatorium: de quo Matt. xxii. 12. Ibi de Cœnatorio nuptiali.

⁴ [De LXX. Interpretibus, ad

calc. Josephi, Colon. 1691, p. 33, ἐπερώτησαν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο· τίνος χάριν ἀπονιζόμενοι τὰς χεῖρας, τὸ τηνικαῦτα εὐχονται; διεσάφουν δὲ, ὅτι μαρτύριόν ἐστι τοῦ μηδὲν εἰργάσθαι κακόν· πᾶσα γὰρ ἐνέργεια διὰ τῶν χειρῶν γίνεται.]

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Ch. vii. 1, 2.

mentioned by Josephus in the history of his own life¹, and by the words of Peter signified². Tedious it were to rip up all such things as were in that church established, yea by Christ himself and by his Apostle observed, though not commanded any where in Scripture.

VII. Well, yet a gloss there is to colour that paradox, and notwithstanding all this, still to make it appear in show not to be altogether unreasonable. And therefore till further reply come, the cause is held by a feeble distinction; that the commandments of God being either general or special, although there be no express word for every thing in specialty, yet there are general commandments for all things, to the end, that even such cases as are not in Scripture particularly mentioned, might not be left to any to order at their pleasure only with caution, that nothing be done against the word of God: and that for this cause the Apostle hath set down in Scripture four general rules, requiring such things alone to be received in the Church as do best and nearest agree with the same rules, that so all things in the Church may be appointed, not only *not against*, but *by* and *according to* the word of God. The rules are these, "Nothing scandalous or offensive unto any, especially unto the Church of God³;" "All things in order and with seemliness⁴;" "All unto edification⁵;" finally, "All to the glory of God⁶." Of which kind how many might be gathered out of the Scripture, if it were necessary to take so much pains? Which rules they that urge, minding thereby to prove that nothing may be done in the Church but what Scripture commandeth, must needs hold that they tie the Church of Christ no otherwise than only because we find them there set down by the finger of the Holy Ghost. So that unless the Apostle by writing had delivered those rules to the Church, we should by observing them have sinned, as now by not observing them.

[2.] In the Church of the Jews is it not granted⁷, that the appointment of the hour for daily sacrifices; the building of synagogues throughout the land to hear the word of God and

¹ [c. 54. τὴν σύνοδον διέλυσεν ἐπελθοῦσα ἑκτη ὥρα, καθ' ἣν τοῖς σάβ- βασις ἀριστοποιεῖσθαι νόμιμον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν. Cf. Acts x. 9.]

² [Acts ii. 15.]

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

⁵ Rom. xiv. 6, 7. [and 1 Cor. x.

⁶ 31. see T. C. i. 27.]

⁷ T. C. lib. i. p. 35. [21.]

to pray in, when they came not up to Jerusalem, the erecting of pulpits and chairs to teach in, the order of burial, the rites of marriage, with such-like, being matters appertaining to the Church, yet are not any where prescribed in the law, but were by the Church's discretion instituted? What then shall we think? Did they hereby add to the law, and so displease God by that which they did? None so hardly persuaded of them. Doth their law deliver unto them the selfsame general rules of the Apostle, that framing thereby their orders they might in that respect clear themselves from doing amiss? St. Paul would then of likelihood have cited them out of the Law, which we see he doth not. The truth is, they are rules and canons of that law which is written in all men's hearts; the Church had for ever no less than now stood bound to observe them, whether the Apostles had mentioned them or no.

Seeing therefore those canons do bind as they are edicts of nature, which the Jews observing as yet unwritten, and thereby framing such church orders as in their law were not prescribed, are notwithstanding in that respect unculpable: it followeth that sundry things may be lawfully done in the Church, so as they be not done against the Scripture, although no Scripture do command them, but the Church only following the light of reason judge them to be in discretion meet.

[3.] Secondly, unto our purpose and for the question in hand, whether the commandments of God in Scripture be general or special, it skilleth not: for if being particularly applied they have in regard of such particulars a force constraining us to take some one certain thing of many, and to leave the rest; whereby it would come to pass, that any other particular but that one being established, the general rules themselves in that case would be broken; then is it utterly impossible that God should leave any thing great or small free for the Church to establish or not.

[4.] Thirdly, if so be they shall grant, as they cannot otherwise do, that these rules are no such laws as require any one particular thing to be done, but serve rather to direct the Church in all things which she doth; so that free and lawful it is to devise any ceremony, to receive any order, and to authorize any kind of regiment, no special command-

ment being thereby violated, and the same being thought such by them, to whom the judgment thereof appertaineth, as that it is not scandalous, but decent, tending unto edification, and setting forth the glory of God; that is to say, agreeable unto the general rules of Holy Scripture: this doth them no good in the world for the furtherance of their purpose. That which should make for them must prove that men ought not to make laws for church regiment, but only keep those laws which in Scripture they find made. The plain intent of the Book of Ecclesiastical Discipline¹ is to shew that men may not devise laws of church government, but are bound for ever to use and to execute only those which God himself hath already devised and delivered in the Scripture. The selfsame drift the Admonitioners also had, in urging that nothing ought to be done in the Church according unto any law of man's devising, but all according to that which God in his word hath commanded. Which not remembering, they gather out of Scripture general rules to be followed in making laws; and so in effect they plainly grant that we ourselves may lawfully make laws for the Church, and are not bound out of Scripture only to take laws already made, as they meant who first alleged that principle whereof we speak. One particular platform it is which they respected, and which they laboured thereby to force upon all Churches; whereas these general rules do not let but that there may well enough be sundry. It is the particular order established in the Church of England, which thereby they did intend to alter, as being not commanded of God; whereas unto those general rules they know we do not defend that we may hold any thing unconformable. Obscure it is not what meaning they had, who first gave out that grand axiom; and according unto that meaning it doth prevail far and wide with the favourers of that part. Demand of them, wherefore they conform not themselves unto the order of our Church, and in every particular their answer for the most part is, "We find no such thing commanded in the word:" whereby they plainly require some special commandment for that which is exacted at their hands; neither are they content

¹ [By Travers, Geneva 1580.]

BOOK III. to have matters of the Church examined by general rules
Ch. vii. 5. and canons.
viii. 1, 2.

[5.] As therefore in controversies between us and the Church of Rome, that which they practise is many times even according to the very grossness of that which the vulgar sort conceiveth; when that which they teach to maintain it is so nice and subtle that hold can very hardly be taken thereupon; in which cases we should do the Church of God small benefit by disputing with them according unto the finest points of their dark conveyances, and suffering that sense of their doctrine to go uncontrolled, wherein by the common sort it is ordinarily received and practised: so considering what disturbance hath grown in the Church amongst ourselves, and how the authors thereof do commonly build altogether on this as a sure foundation, "Nothing ought to be established in the Church which "in the word of God is not commanded;" were it reason that we should suffer the same to pass without controlment in that current meaning whereby every where it prevaieth, and stay till some strange construction were made thereof, which no man would lightly have thought on but being driven thereunto for a shift?

Another answer in defence of the former assertion, whereby the meaning thereof is opened in this sort. All Church orders must be commanded in the word, that is to say, grounded upon the word, and made according at the leastwise unto the general rules of Holy Scripture. As

VIII. The last refuge in maintaining this position is thus to construe it, "Nothing ought to be established in the Church, "but that which is commanded in the word of God;" that is to say, all Church orders must be "grounded upon the word "of God¹;" in such sort grounded upon the word, not that being found out by some "star, or light of reason, or learning, "or other help," they may be received, so they be not against the word of God; but according at leastwise unto the general rules of Scripture they must be made. Which is in effect as much as to say, "We know not what to say well in defence "of this position; and therefore lest we should say it is false, "there is no remedy but to say that in some sense or other it "may be true, if we could tell how."

[2.] First, that scholy had need of a very favourable reader and a tractable, that should think it plain construction, when to be *commanded in the word* and *grounded upon the word* are made all one. If when a man may live in the state of matrimony, seeking that good thereby which nature principally

¹ [T. C. ii. 56.]

desireth¹, he make rather choice of a contrary life in regard of St. Paul's judgment²; that which he doth is manifestly *grounded* upon the word of God, yet not *commanded* in his word, because without breach of any commandment he might do otherwise.

[3.] Secondly, whereas no man in justice and reason can be reproved for those actions which are framed according unto that known will of God, whereby they are to be judged; and the will of God which we are to judge our actions by, no sound divine in the world ever denied to be in part made manifest even by light of nature, and not by Scripture alone: if the Church being directed by the former of these two (which God hath given who gave the other, that man might in different sort be guided by them both), if the Church I say do approve and establish that which thereby it judgeth meet, and findeth not repugnant to any word or syllable of holy Scripture; who shall warrant our presumptuous boldness controlling herein the Church of Christ?

[4.] But so it is, the name of the light of nature is made hateful with men; the "star of reason and learning," and all other such like helps, beginneth no otherwise to be thought of than if it were an unlucky comet; or as if God had so accursed it, that it should never shine or give light in things concerning our duty any way towards him, but be esteemed as that star in the Revelation³ called *Wormwood*, which being fallen from heaven, maketh rivers and waters in which it falleth so bitter, that men tasting them die thereof. A number there are, who think they cannot admire as they ought the power and authority of the word of God, if in things divine they should attribute any force to man's reason. For which cause they never use reason so willingly as to disgrace reason. Their usual and common discourses are unto this effect. First, "the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of "God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he "know them, because they are spiritually discerned⁴." Secondly, it is not for nothing that St. Paul giveth charge to "beware of philosophy⁵," that is to say, such knowledge as men by natural reason attain unto. Thirdly, consider them

¹ Arist. Pol. i. 2.

² 1 Cor. vii. 8. 26.

³ Apoc. viii. 10.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

⁵ Col. ii. 8.

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Ch. viii. 3, 4.

for such things as are found out by any star or light of reason, and are in that respect received so they be not against the word of God, all such things it holdeth unlawfully received.

that have from time to time opposed themselves against the Gospel of Christ, and most troubled the Church with heresy. Have they not always been great admirers of human reason? Hath their deep and profound skill in secular learning made them the more obedient to the truth, and not armed them rather against it? Fourthly, they that fear God will remember how heavy his sentences are in this case: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will cast away the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made the wisdom of this world foolishness? Seeing the world by wisdom knew not God in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save believers¹." Fifthly, the word of God in itself is absolute, exact and perfect. The word of God is a two-edged sword²; as for the weapons of natural reason, they are as the armour of Saul³, rather cumbersome about the soldier of Christ than needful. They are not of force to do that which the Apostles of Christ did by the power of the Holy Ghost: "My preaching," therefore saith Paul, "hath not been in the enticing speech of man's wisdom, but in plain evidence of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God⁴." Sixthly, if I believe the Gospel, there needeth no reasoning about it to persuade me; if I do not believe, it must be the Spirit of God and not the reason of man that shall convert my heart unto him. By these and the like disputes an opinion hath spread itself very far in the world, as if the way to be ripe in faith were to be raw in wit and judgment; as if reason were an enemy unto religion, childish simplicity the mother of ghostly and divine wisdom.

[5.] The cause why such declamations prevail so greatly, is, for that men suffer themselves in two respects to be deluded; one is, that the wisdom of man being debased either in comparison with that of God, or in regard of some special thing exceeding the reach and compass thereof, it seemeth to them (not marking so much) as if simply it were condemned: another, that learning, knowledge or wisdom, falsely so termed, usurping a name whereof they are not worthy, and being

¹ 1 Cor. i. 19. ² [Heb. iv. 12.] ³ [1 Sam. xvii. 39.] ⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 4.

under that name controlled; their reproof is by so much the more easily misapplied, and through equivocation wrested against those things whereunto so precious names do properly and of right belong. This, duly observed, doth to the former allegations itself make sufficient answer. Howbeit, for all men's plainer and fuller satisfaction:

[6.] First, Concerning the inability of reason to search out and to judge of things divine, if they be such as those properties of God and those duties of men towards him, which may be conceived by attentive consideration of heaven and earth; we know that of mere natural men the Apostle testifieth¹, how they knew both God, and the Law of God. Other things of God there be which are neither so found, nor though they be shewed can never be approved without the *special* operation of God's good grace and Spirit. Of such things sometime spake the Apostle St. Paul, declaring how Christ had called him to be a witness of his death and resurrection from the dead, according to that which the Prophets and Moses had foreshewed. Festus, a mere natural man, an infidel, a Roman, one whose ears were unacquainted with such matter, heard him, but could not reach unto that whereof he spake; the suffering and the rising of Christ from the dead he rejecteth as idle superstitious fancies not worth the hearing². The Apostle that knew them by the Spirit, and spake of them with power of the Holy Ghost, seemed in his eyes but learnedly mad³. Which example maketh manifest what elsewhere the same Apostle teacheth, namely, that nature hath need of grace⁴, whereunto I hope we are not opposite, by holding that grace hath use of nature.

[7.] Secondly, Philosophy we are warned to take heed of: not that philosophy, which is true and sound knowledge attained by natural discourse of reason; but that philosophy, which to bolster heresy or error casteth a fraudulent show of reason upon things which are indeed unreasonable, and by that mean as by a stratagem spoileth the simple which are not able to withstand such cunning. "Take heed lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit⁵." He that exhorteth to beware of an enemy's policy doth not give

¹ Rom. i. 21, 32.

² Acts xxv. 19.

³ Acts xxvi. 24.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

⁵ Col. ii. 8.