

BOOK I. hood, and good from evil, do thereby learn in many things
Ch. viii. 4, 5. what the will of God is; which will himself not revealing
by any extraordinary means unto them, but they by natural
discourse attaining the knowledge thereof, seem the makers
of those Laws which indeed are his, and they but only the
finders of them out.

[4.] A law therefore generally taken, is a directive rule unto goodness of operation. The rule of divine operations outward, is the definitive appointment of God's own wisdom set down within himself. The rule of natural agents that work by simple necessity, is the determination of the wisdom of God, known to God himself the principal director of them, but not unto them that are directed to execute the same. The rule of natural agents which work after a sort of their own accord, as the beasts do, is the judgment of common sense or fancy concerning the sensible goodness of those objects wherewith they are moved. The rule of ghostly or immaterial natures, as spirits and angels, is their intuitive intellectual judgment concerning the amiable beauty and high goodness of that object, which with unspeakable joy and delight doth set them on work. The rule of voluntary agents on earth is the sentence that Reason giveth concerning the goodness of those things which they are to do. And the sentences which Reason giveth are some more some less general, before it come to define in particular actions what is good.

[5.] The main principles of Reason are in themselves apparent. For to make nothing evident of itself unto man's understanding were to take away all possibility of knowing any thing. And herein that of Theophrastus is true, "They that seek a reason of all things do utterly overthrow Reason¹." In every kind of knowledge some such grounds there are, as that being proposed the mind doth presently embrace them as free from all possibility of error, clear and manifest without proof. In which kind axioms or principles more general are such as this, "that the greater good is to be chosen before the less." If therefore it should be demanded what reason there is, why the Will of Man, which doth necessarily shun harm and covet whatso-

¹ Ἀπάντων ζητούντες λόγον, ἀναιροῦσι λόγον. Theoph. in Metaph. [p. 270. 23.]

BOOK I. ever is pleasant and sweet, should be commanded to count
Ch. viii. 5. the pleasures of sin gall, and notwithstanding the bitter
accidents wherewith virtuous actions are compassed, yet still
to rejoice and delight in them: surely this could never stand
with Reason, but that wisdom thus prescribing groundeth
her laws upon an infallible rule of comparison; which is,
"That small difficulties, when exceeding great good is sure
"to ensue, and on the other side momentary benefits, when
"the hurt which they draw after them is unspeakable, are not
"at all to be respected." This rule is the ground whereupon
the wisdom of the Apostle buildeth a law, enjoining patience
unto himself¹; "The present lightness of our affliction worketh
"unto us even with abundance upon abundance an eternal
"weight of glory; while we look not on the things which are
"seen, but on the things which are not seen: for the things
"which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not
"seen are eternal:" therefore Christianity to be embraced,
"whatsoever calamities in those times it was accompanied
withal. Upon the same ground our Saviour proveth the law
most reasonable, that doth forbid those crimes which men for
gain's sake fall into. "For a man to win the world if it be
"with the loss of his soul, what benefit or good is it²?"
Axioms less general, yet so manifest that they need no further
proof, are such as these, "God to be worshipped;" "parents to
"be honoured;" "others to be used by us as we ourselves
"would by them." Such things, as soon as they are alleged,
all men acknowledge to be good; they require no proof or
further discourse to be assured of their goodness.

Notwithstanding whatsoever such principle there is, it was
at the first found out by discourse, and drawn from out of the
very bowels of heaven and earth. For we are to note, that
things in the world are to us discernible, not only so far forth
as serveth for our vital preservation, but further also in a
twofold higher respect. For first if all other uses were utterly
taken away, yet the mind of man being by nature speculative
and delighted with contemplation in itself, they were to be
known even for mere knowledge and understanding's sake.
Yea further besides this, the knowledge of every the least

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

² Matt. xvi. 26.

thing in the whole world hath in it a second peculiar benefit unto us, inasmuch as it serveth to minister rules, canons, and laws, for men to direct those actions by, which we properly term human. This did the very heathens themselves obscurely insinuate, by making *Themis*, which we call *Jus*, or Right, to be the daughter of heaven and earth¹.

[6.] We know things either as they are in themselves, or as they are in mutual relation one to another. The knowledge of that which man is in reference unto himself, and other things in relation unto man, I may justly term the mother of all those principles, which are as it were edicts, statutes, and decrees, in that Law of Nature, whereby human actions are framed. First therefore having observed that the best things, where they are not hindered, do still produce the best operations, (for which cause, where many things are to concur unto one effect, the best is in all congruity of reason to guide the residue, that it prevailing most, the work principally done by it may have greatest perfection :) when hereupon we come to observe in ourselves, of what excellency our souls are in comparison of our bodies, and the diviner part in relation unto the baser of our souls; seeing that all these concur in producing human actions, it cannot be well unless the chiefest do command and direct the rest². The soul then ought to conduct the body, and the spirit of our minds³ the soul. This is therefore the first Law, whereby the highest power of the mind requireth general obedience at the hands of all the rest concurring with it unto action.

[7.] Touching the several grand mandates, which being imposed by the understanding faculty of the mind must be obeyed by the Will of Man, they are by the same method found out, whether they import our duty towards God or towards man.

Touching the one, I may not here stand to open, by what degrees of discourse the minds even of mere natural men have attained to know, not only that there is a God, but also what power, force, wisdom, and other properties that God hath, and how all things depend on him. This being therefore presupposed, from that known relation which God hath

¹ [Hesiod. Theog. 126, 135, 135.] ² Arist. Pol. i. cap. 5. ³ [Eph. iv. 23.]

unto us as unto children¹, and unto all good things as unto effects whereof himself is the principal cause², these axioms and laws natural concerning our duty have arisen, "that in all things we go about his aid is by prayer to be craved³:" "that he cannot have sufficient honour done unto him, but the utmost of that we can do to honour him we must⁴;" which is in effect the same that we read⁵, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind:" which Law our Saviour doth term⁶ "The first and the great commandment."

Touching the next, which as our Saviour addeth is "like unto this," (he meaneth in amplitude and largeness, inasmuch as it is the root out of which all Laws of duty to menward have grown, as out of the former all offices of religion towards God,) the like natural inducement hath brought men to know that it is their duty no less to love others than themselves. For seeing those things which are equal must needs all have one measure; if I cannot but wish to receive all good, even as much at every man's hand as any man can wish unto his own soul, how should I look to have any part of my desire herein satisfied, unless myself be careful to satisfy the like desire which is undoubtedly in other men, we all being of one and the same nature? To have any thing offered them repugnant to this desire must needs in all respects grieve them as much as me: so that if I do harm I must look to suffer; there being no reason that others should shew greater measure of love to me than they have by me shewed unto them. My desire therefore to be loved of my equals in nature as much as possible may be, imposeth upon me a natural duty of bearing to them-ward fully the like affection. From which relation of equality between ourselves and them that are as ourselves, what several rules and canons natural Reason hath drawn for direction of life no man is ignorant; as namely, "That because we would take no harm, we must

¹ Οὐδείς Θεός δύναντος ἀνθρώποις. Plat. in Theæt. [t. i. 151. ed. Ser-rani.]

² Ὅ τε γὰρ Θεός δοκεῖ τὸ αἴτιον πάντων εἶναι καὶ ἀρχὴ τις. Arist. Metaph. lib. i. cap. 2. [t. ii. 485.]

³ Ἄλλ', ὃ Σώκρατες, τοῦτό γε δὴ πάντες, ὅσοι καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ σωφρο-

σύνης μετέχουσιν, ἐπὶ πάσῃ ὁρμῇ καὶ σμικροῦ καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος Θεὸν αἰεὶ πον καλοῦσι. Plat. in Tim. [t. iii. 27.]

⁴ Arist. Ethic. lib. iii. cap. ult.

⁵ Deut. vi. 5.

⁶ Matt. xxii. 38.

“therefore do none;” “That sith we would not be in any thing extremely dealt with, we must ourselves avoid all extremity in our dealings;” “That from all violence and wrong we are utterly to abstain¹;” with such like; which further to wade in would be tedious, and to our present purpose not altogether so necessary, seeing that on these two general heads already mentioned all other specialities are dependent².

[8.] Wherefore the natural measure whereby to judge our doings, is the sentence of Reason, determining and setting down what is good to be done. Which sentence is either mandatory, shewing what must be done; or else permissive, declaring only what may be done; or thirdly admonitory, opening what is the most convenient for us to do. The first taketh place, where the comparison doth stand altogether between doing and not doing of one thing which in itself is absolutely good or evil; as it had been for Joseph³ to yield or not to yield to the impotent desire of his lewd mistress, the one evil the other good simply. The second is, when of divers things evil, all being not evitable, we are permitted to take one; which one saving only in case of so great urgency were not otherwise to be taken; as in the matter of divorce amongst the Jews⁴. The last, when of divers things good, one is principal and most eminent; as in their act who sold their possessions and laid the price at the Apostles’ feet⁵; which possessions they might have retained unto themselves without sin: again, in the Apostle St. Paul’s own choice⁶ to maintain himself by his own labour; whereas in living by the Church’s maintenance, as others did, there had been no offence committed⁷. In Goodness therefore there is a latitude or extent, whereby it cometh to pass that even of good actions some are better than other some; whereas

¹ “Quod quis in se approbat, in alio reprobare non posse.” L. *in arenam*, C. de inof. test. [Cod. Just. p. 254. ed. Lugd. 1553.] “Quod quisque juris in alium stuerit, ipsum quoque eodem uti debere.” L. *quod quisque*. [Digest. lib. ii. tit. 2. tom. i. p. 60. Lugd. 1552.] “Ab omni penitus injuria atque vi abstinendum.” L. i. sect. i. *Quod vi, aut clam*.

[Ibid. lib. xliii. tit. 23. tom. 3. p. 335.]

² “On these two commandments hangeth the whole Law.” Matt. xxii. 40.

³ Gen. xxxix. 9.

⁴ Mark x. 4.

⁵ Acts iv. 37; v. 4.

⁶ 2 Thess. iii. 8.

⁷ [See note, b. ii. c. 8. § 5.]

otherwise one man could not excel another, but all should be either absolutely good, as hitting jump that indivisible point or centre wherein goodness consisteth; or else missing it they should be excluded out of the number of well-doers. Degrees of well-doing there could be none, except perhaps in the seldomness and oftenness of doing well. But the nature of Goodness being thus ample, a Law is properly that which Reason in such sort defineth to be good that it must be done. And the Law of Reason or human Nature is that which men by discourse of natural Reason have rightly found out themselves to be all for ever bound unto in their actions.

[9.] Laws of Reason have these marks to be known by. Such as keep them resemble most lively in their voluntary actions that very manner of working which Nature herself doth necessarily observe in the course of the whole world. The works of Nature are all behoveful, beautiful, without superfluity or defect; even so theirs, if they be framed according to that which the Law of Reason teacheth. Secondly, those Laws are investigable by Reason, without the help of Revelation supernatural and divine. Finally, in such sort they are investigable, that the knowledge of them is general, the world hath always been acquainted with them; according to that which one in Sophocles observeth concerning a branch of this Law, “It is no child of to-day’s or yesterday’s birth, “but hath been no man knoweth how long sithence¹.” It is not agreed upon by one, or two, or few, but by all. Which we may not so understand, as if every particular man in the whole world did know and confess whatsoever the Law of Reason doth contain; but this Law is such that being proposed no man can reject it as unreasonable and unjust. Again, there is nothing in it but any man (having natural perfection of wit and ripeness of judgment) may by labour and travail find out. And to conclude, the general principles thereof are such, as it is not easy to find men ignorant of them, Law rational therefore, which men commonly use to call the Law of Nature, meaning thereby the Law which human Nature knoweth itself in reason universally bound unto, which also

¹ Οὐ γὰρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ’ αἰεί ποτε
Ζῆ ταῦτα, κοῦδεῖς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου φάνη.

Soph. Antig. [v. 456.]

for that cause may be termed most fitly the Law of Reason ; this Law, I say, comprehendeth all those things which men by the light of their natural understanding evidently know, or at leastwise may know, to be beseeming or unbeseeming, virtuous or vicious, good or evil for them to do.

[10.] Now although it be true, which some have said¹, that "whatsoever is done amiss, the Law of Nature and Reason thereby is transgressed," because even those offences which are by their special qualities breaches of supernatural laws, do also, for that they are generally evil, violate in general that principle of Reason, which willeth universally to fly from evil: yet do we not therefore so far extend the Law of Reason, as to contain in it all manner laws whereunto reasonable creatures are bound, but (as hath been shewed) we restrain it to those only duties, which all men by force of natural wit either do or might understand to be such duties as concern all men. "Certain half-waking men there are" (as Saint Augustine noteth²), "who neither altogether asleep in folly, nor yet throughly awake in the light of true understanding, have thought that there is not at all any thing just and righteous in itself; but look, wherewith nations are inured, the same they take to be right and just. Whereupon their conclusion is, that seeing each sort of people hath a different kind of right from other, and that which is right of its own nature must be every-where one and the same, therefore in itself there is nothing right. These good folk," saith he, ("that I may not trouble their wits with rehearsal of too many things,) have not looked so far into the world as to perceive that, 'Do as thou wouldest be done unto,' is a sentence which all nations

¹ Th. 1. 2. q. 94. art. 3. [tom. xi. 204.] "Omnia peccata sunt in univ. contra rationem et naturæ legem." Aug. de Civit. Dei, l. xii. cap. 1. "Omne vitium naturæ nocet, ac per hoc contra naturam est." [tom. vii. 301.]

² De Doctr. Christ. l. iii. c. 14. [tom. iii. 51.] "Quidam dormitantes, ut ita dicam, qui neque alto somno stultitiæ sopiebantur, nec in sapientiæ lucem poterant evigilare, putaverunt nullam esse justitiam per se ipsam, sed uni-

"cuique genti consuetudinem suam justam videri; quæ cum sit diversa omnibus gentibus, debeat autem incommutabilis manere justitia, fieri manifestum, nullam usquam esse justitiam. Non intellexerunt, (ne multa commemorem,) 'Quod tibi fieri non vis, alii ne feceris,' nullo modo posse ulla eorum gentili diversitate variari. Quæ sententia cum refertur ad dilectionem Dei, omnia flagitia moriuntur; cum ad proximi, omnia facinora."]

"under heaven are agreed upon. Refer this sentence to the love of God, and it extinguisheth all heinous crimes; refer it to the love of thy neighbour, and all grievous wrongs it banisheth out of the world." Wherefore as touching the Law of Reason, this was (it seemeth) Saint Augustine's judgment: namely, that there are in it some things which stand as principles universally agreed upon; and that out of those principles, which are in themselves evident, the greatest moral duties we owe towards God or man may without any great difficulty be concluded.

[11.] If then it be here demanded, by what means it should come to pass (the greatest part of the Law moral being so easy for all men to know) that so many thousands of men notwithstanding have been ignorant even of principal moral duties, not imagining the breach of them to be sin: I deny not but lewd and wicked custom, beginning perhaps at the first amongst few, afterwards spreading into greater multitudes, and so continuing from time to time, may be of force even in plain things to smother the light of natural understanding; because men will not bend their wits to examine whether things wherewith they have been accustomed be good or evil. For example's sake, that grosser kind of heathenish idolatry, whereby they worshipped the very works of their own hands, was an absurdity to reason so palpable, that the Prophet David comparing idols and idolaters together maketh almost no odds between them, but the one in a manner as much without wit and sense as the other; "They that make them are like unto them, and so are all that trust in them¹." That wherein an idolater doth seem so absurd and foolish is by the Wise Man thus exprest², "He is not ashamed to speak unto that which hath no life, he calleth on him that is weak for health, he prayeth for life unto him which is dead, of him which hath no experience he requireth help, for his journey he sueth to him which is not able to go, for gain and work and success in his affairs he seeketh furtherance of him that hath no manner of power." The cause of which senseless stupidity is afterwards imputed to custom³. "When a father mourned grievously for his son that was taken away suddenly, he

¹ Psal. cxxxv. 18.

² Wisd. xiii. 17.

³ Wisd. xiv. 15, 16.

“made an image for him that was once dead, whom now he worshippeth as a god, ordaining to his servants ceremonies and sacrifices. Thus by process of time this wicked custom prevailed, and was kept as a law;” the authority of rulers, the ambition of craftsmen, and such like means thrusting forward the ignorant, and increasing their superstition.

Unto this which the Wise Man hath spoken somewhat besides may be added. For whatsoever we have hitherto taught, or shall hereafter, concerning the force of man’s natural understanding, this we always desire withal to be understood; that there is no kind of faculty or power in man or any other creature, which can rightly perform the functions allotted to it, without perpetual aid and concurrence of that Supreme Cause of all things. The benefit whereof as oft as we cause God in his justice to withdraw, there can no other thing follow than that which the Apostle noteth, even men endued with the light of reason to walk notwithstanding¹ “in the vanity of their mind, having their cogitations darkened, and being strangers from the life of God through the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts.” And this cause is mentioned by the prophet Esay², speaking of the ignorance of idolaters, who see not how the manifest Law of Reason condemneth their gross iniquity and sin. “They have not in them,” saith he, “so much wit as to think, ‘Shall I bow to the stock of a tree?’ All knowledge and understanding is taken from them; for God hath shut their eyes that they cannot see.”

That which we say in this case of idolatry serveth for all other things, wherein the like kind of general blindness hath prevailed against the manifest Laws of Reason. Within the compass of which laws we do not only comprehend whatsoever may be easily known to belong to the duty of all men, but even whatsoever may possibly be known to be of that quality, so that the same be by *necessary* consequence deduced out of clear and manifest principles. For if once we descend unto probable collections what is convenient for men, we are then in the territory where free and arbitrary determinations, the territory where Human Laws take place; which laws are after to be considered.

¹ Ephes. iv. 17, 18.² Isa. xlv. 18, 19.

IX. Now the due observation of this Law which Reason teacheth us cannot but be effectual unto their great good that observe the same. For we see the whole world and each part thereof so compacted, that as long as each thing performeth only that work which is natural unto it, it thereby preserveth both other things and also itself. Contrariwise, let any principal thing, as the sun, the moon, any one of the heavens or elements, but once cease or fail, or swerve, and who doth not easily conceive that the sequel thereof would be ruin both to itself and whatsoever dependeth on it? And is it possible, that Man being not only the noblest creature in the world, but even a very world in himself, his transgressing the Law of his Nature should draw no manner of harm after it? Yes¹, “tribulation and anguish unto every soul that doeth evil.” Good doth follow unto all things by observing the course of their nature, and on the contrary side evil by not observing it; but not unto natural agents that good which we call Reward, not that evil which we properly term Punishment. The reason whereof is, because amongst creatures in this world, only Man’s observation of the Law of his Nature is Righteousness, only Man’s transgression Sin. And the reason of this is the difference in his manner of observing or transgressing the Law of his Nature. He doth not otherwise than voluntarily the one or the other. What we do against our wills, or constrainedly, we are not properly said to do it, because the motive cause of doing it is not in ourselves, but carrieth us, as if the wind should drive a feather in the air, we no whit furthering that whereby we are driven. In such cases therefore the evil which is done moveth compassion; men are pitied for it, as being rather miserable in such respect than culpable. Some things are likewise done by man, though not through outward force and impulsion, though not against, yet without their wills; as in alienation of mind, or any the like inevitable utter absence of wit and judgment. For which cause, no man did ever think the hurtful actions of furious men and innocents to be punishable. Again, some things we do neither against nor without, and yet not simply and merely with our wills, but with our wills in such sort moved, that

¹ Rom. ii. 9.