

of them presupposeth many necessary things learned in other sciences and known beforehand. He that should take upon him to teach men how to be eloquent in pleading causes, must needs deliver unto them whatsoever precepts are requisite unto that end; otherwise he doth not the thing which he taketh upon him. Seeing then no man can plead eloquently unless he be able first to speak; it followeth that ability of speech is in this case a thing most necessary. Notwithstanding every man would think it ridiculous, that he which undertaketh by writing to instruct an orator should therefore deliver all the precepts of grammar; because his profession is to deliver precepts necessary unto eloquent speech, yet so that they which are to receive them be taught beforehand so much of that which is thereunto necessary, as comprehendeth the skill of speaking. In like sort, albeit Scripture do profess to contain in it all things that are necessary unto salvation; yet the meaning cannot be simply of all things which are necessary, but all things that are necessary in some certain kind or form; as all things which are necessary, and either could not at all or could not easily be known by the light of natural discourse; all things which are necessary to be known that we may be saved, but known with presupposal of knowledge concerning certain principles whereof it receiveth us already persuaded, and then instructeth us in all the residue that are necessary. In the number of these principles one is the sacred authority of Scripture. Being therefore persuaded by other means that these Scriptures are the oracles of God, themselves do then teach us the rest, and lay before us all the duties which God requireth at our hands as necessary unto salvation.

[2.] Further, there hath been some doubt likewise, whether *containing in Scripture* do import express setting down in plain terms, or else *comprehending* in such sort that by reason we may from thence conclude all things which are necessary. Against the former of these two constructions instance hath sundry ways been given. For our belief in the Trinity, the co-eternity of the Son of God with his Father, the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the duty of baptizing infants: these with such

other principal points, the necessity whereof is by none denied, are notwithstanding in Scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention, only deduced they are out of Scripture by collection. This kind of comprehension in Scripture being therefore received, still there is doubt how far we are to proceed by collection, before the full and complete measure of things necessary be made up. For let us not think that as long as the world doth endure the wit of man shall be able to sound the bottom of that which may be concluded out of the Scripture; especially if "things contained by collection" do so far extend, as to draw in whatsoever may be at any time out of Scripture but probably and conjecturally surmised. But let *necessary* collection be made requisite, and we may boldly deny, that of all those things which at this day are with so great necessity urged upon this church under the name of reformed church-discipline, there is any one which their books hitherto have made manifest to be contained in the Scripture. Let them, if they can, allege but one properly belonging to their cause, and not common to them and us, and shew the deduction thereof out of Scripture to be necessary.

[3.] It hath been already shewed, how all things necessary unto salvation in such sort as before we have maintained must needs be possible for men to know; and that many things are in such sort necessary, the knowledge whereof is by the light of Nature impossible to be attained. Whereupon it followeth that either all flesh is excluded from possibility of salvation, which to think were most barbarous; or else that God hath by supernatural means revealed the way of life so far forth as doth suffice. For this cause God hath so many times and ways spoken to the sons of men. Neither hath he by speech only, but by writing also, instructed and taught his Church. The cause of writing hath been to the end that things by him revealed unto the world might have the longer continuance, and the greater certainty of assurance, by how much that which standeth on record hath in both those respects preeminence above that which passeth from hand to hand, and hath no pens but the tongues, no books but the ears of men to record it. The several books of Scripture having had each some several occasion and particular purpose which

caused them to be written, the contents thereof are according to the exigence of that special end whereunto they are intended. Hereupon it groweth that every book of Holy Scripture doth take out of all kinds of truth, natural<sup>1</sup>, historical<sup>2</sup>, foreign<sup>3</sup>, supernatural<sup>4</sup>, so much as the matter handled requireth.

Now forasmuch as there hath been reason alleged sufficient to conclude, that all things necessary unto salvation must be made known, and that God himself hath therefore revealed his will, because otherwise men could not have known so much as is necessary; his surceasing to speak to the world, since the publishing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the delivery of the same in writing, is unto us a manifest token that the way of salvation is now sufficiently opened, and that we need no other means for our full instruction than God hath already furnished us withal.

[4.] The main drift of the whole New Testament is that which St. John setteth down as the purpose of his own history; <sup>5</sup> "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God, and that in believing ye might have life through his name." The drift of the Old that which the Apostle mentioneth to Timothy, <sup>6</sup> "The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation." So that the general end both of Old and New is one; the difference between them consisting in this, that the Old did make wise by teaching salvation through Christ that should come, the New by teaching that Christ the Saviour is come, and that Jesus whom the Jews did crucify, and whom God did raise again from the dead, is he. When the Apostle therefore affirmeth unto Timothy, that the Old was able to make him wise to salvation, it was not his meaning that the Old alone can do this unto us which live sithence the publication of the New. For he speaketh with presupposal of the doctrine of Christ known also unto Timothy; and therefore first it is said, <sup>7</sup> "Continue thou in those things which thou hast learned and art persuaded, knowing of whom thou hast been taught them." Again, those Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 29.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 8.    <sup>3</sup> Tit. i. 12.    <sup>4</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 4.  
<sup>5</sup> John xx. 31.    <sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.    <sup>7</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 14.

tures he granteth were able to make him wise to salvation; but he addeth, <sup>1</sup> "through the faith which is in Christ." Wherefore without the doctrine of the New Testament teaching that Christ hath wrought the redemption of the world, which redemption the Old did foreshew he should work, it is not the former alone which can on our behalf perform so much as the Apostle doth avouch, who presupposeth this when he magnifieth that so highly. And as his words concerning the books of ancient Scripture do not take place but with presupposal of the Gospel of Christ embraced; so our own words also, when we extol the complete sufficiency of the whole entire body of the Scripture, must in like sort be understood with this caution, that the benefit of nature's light be not thought excluded as unnecessary, because the necessity of a diviner light is magnified.

[5.] There is in Scripture therefore no defect, but that any man, what place or calling soever he hold in the Church of God, may have thereby the light of his natural understanding so perfected, that the one being relieved by the other, there can want no part of needful instruction unto any good work which God himself requireth, be it natural or supernatural, belonging simply unto men as men, or unto men as they are united in whatsoever kind of society. It sufficeth therefore that Nature and Scripture do serve in such full sort, that they both jointly, and not severally either of them, be so complete, that unto everlasting felicity we need not the knowledge of any thing more than these two may easily furnish our minds with on all sides<sup>2</sup>; and therefore they which add traditions, as a part of supernatural necessary truth, have not the truth, but are in error. For they only plead, that whatsoever God revealeth as necessary for all

<sup>1</sup> Verse 15.  
<sup>2</sup> [Christ. Letter, p. 7: "Al- though you exclude traditions as a part of supernaturall trueth, yet you infer that the light of nature teacheth some knowledge naturall whiche is necessarie to salvation." And p. 8: "What scripture approv- eth such a saying, . . . that cases and matters of salvation bee deter- minable by any other lawe then of holy Scripture." Hooker, MS.

note: "Remember here to show the use of the law of nature in hand- ling matters of religion. Are there not cases of salvation wherein a man may have controversie with infidels which believe not the Scriptures? And even with them which believe Scripture the law of nature notwithstanding is not without force, that any man to whom it is alleaged can cast it of as a thing impertinent."]

Christian men to do or believe, the same we ought to embrace, whether we have received it by writing or otherwise; which no man denieth: when that which they should confirm, who claim so great reverence unto traditions, is, that the same traditions are necessarily to be acknowledged divine and holy. For we do not reject them only because they are not in the Scripture, but because they are neither in Scripture, nor can otherwise sufficiently by any reason be proved to be of God. That which is of God, and may be evidently proved to be so, we deny not but it hath in his kind, although unwritten, yet the selfsame force and authority with the written laws of God. It is by ours acknowledged, "that the Apostles did in every church institute and ordain some rites and customs serving for the seemliness of church-regiment, which rites and customs they have not committed unto writing<sup>1</sup>." Those rites and customs being known to be apostolical, and having the nature of things changeable, were no less to be accounted of in the Church than other things of the like degree; that is to say, capable in like sort of alteration, although set down in the Apostles' writings. For both being known to be apostolical, it is not the manner of delivering them unto the Church, but the author from whom they proceed, which doth give them their force and credit.

Of laws positive contained in Scripture; the mutability of certain of them, and the general use of Scripture.

XV. Laws being imposed either by each man upon himself, or by a public society upon the particulars thereof, or by all the nations of men upon every several society, or by the Lord himself upon any or every of these; there is not amongst these four kinds any one but containeth sundry both natural and positive laws. Impossible it is but that they should fall into a number of gross errors, who only take such laws for positive as have been made or invented of men, and holding this position hold also, that all positive and none but positive laws are mutable. Laws natural do always bind; laws positive not so, but only after they have been expressly and

<sup>1</sup> Whitakerus adversus Bellarmin. quæst. 6, cap. 6. ["Fatemur Apostolos in singulis ecclesiis ritus aliquos atque consuetudines, ordinis et decori causa, sanxisse, non autem scripsisse: quia hi

"ritus non fuerunt perpetui futuri, sed liberi, qui pro commodo et temporum ratione mutari possent." Controv. adv. Bellarmin. Opp. I. 372. Controv. I. quæst. 6, cap. 6. Genev. 1610.]

wittingly imposed. Laws positive there are in every of those kinds before mentioned. As in the first kind the promises which we have passed unto men, and the vows we have made unto God; for these are laws which we tie ourselves unto, and till we have so tied ourselves they bind us not. Laws positive in the second kind are such as the civil constitutions peculiar unto each particular commonweal. In the third kind the law of Heraldry in war is positive: and in the last all the judicials which God gave unto the people of Israel to observe. And although no laws but positive be mutable, yet all are not mutable which be positive. Positive laws are either permanent or else changeable, according as the matter itself is concerning which they were first made. Whether God or man be the maker of them, alteration they so far forth admit, as the matter doth exact.

[2.] Laws that concern supernatural duties are all positive<sup>1</sup>, and either concern men supernaturally as men, or else as parts of a supernatural society, which society we call the Church. To concern men as men supernaturally is to concern them as duties which belong of necessity to all, and yet could not have been known by any to belong unto them, unless God had opened them himself, inasmuch as they do not depend upon any natural ground at all out of which they may be deduced, but are appointed of God to supply the defect of those natural ways of salvation, by which we are not now able to attain thereunto. The Church being a supernatural society doth differ from natural societies in this, that the persons unto whom we associate ourselves, in the one are men simply considered as men, but they to whom we be joined in the other, are God, Angels, and holy men. Again the Church being both a society and a society supernatural, although as it is a society it have the selfsame original

<sup>1</sup> [To prevent any misapplication of this principle, it may be useful to compare Butler's Analogy, p. ii. c. i. § 2; where moral precepts and duties are contrasted with positive in a manner which may at first appear inconsistent with Hooker's language. But the appearance of discrepancy will perhaps be removed, if it is considered that Hooker opposes the term Positive to Natural, in regard of our ability or inability to obtain the knowledge of a law without express revelation: Butler on the other hand opposes Positive to Moral, in regard of our ability or inability to discern the reasonableness of a law made known to us by revelation or otherwise.]

grounds which other politic societies have, namely, the natural inclination which all men have unto sociable life, and consent to some certain bond of association, which bond is the law that appointeth what kind of order they shall be associated in: yet unto the Church as it is a society supernatural this is peculiar, that part of the bond of their association which belong to the Church of God must be a law supernatural, which God himself hath revealed concerning that kind of worship which his people shall do unto him. The substance of the service of God therefore, so far forth as it hath in it any thing more than the Law of Reason doth teach, may not be invented of men, as it is amongst the heathens<sup>1</sup>, but must be received from God himself, as always it hath been in the Church, saving only when the Church hath been forgetful of her duty.

[3.] Wherefore to end with a general rule concerning all the laws which God hath tied men unto: those laws divine that belong, whether naturally or supernaturally, either to men as men, or to men as they live in politic society, or to men as they are of that politic society which is the Church, without any further respect had unto any such variable accident as the state of men and of societies of men and of the Church itself in this world is subject unto; all laws that so belong unto men, they belong for ever, yea although they be Positive Laws, unless being positive God himself which made them alter them. The reason is, because the subject or matter of laws in general is thus far forth constant: which matter is that for the ordering whereof laws were instituted, and being instituted are not changeable without cause, neither can they have cause of change, when that which gave them their first institution remaineth for ever one and the same. On the other side, laws that were made for men or societies or churches, in regard of their being such as they do not always continue, but may perhaps be clean otherwise a while after, and so may require to be otherwise ordered than before; the laws of God himself which are of this nature, no man endued with common sense will ever deny to be of a different constitution from the former, in respect of the one's

<sup>1</sup> "Their fear towards me was taught by the precept of men." Lea. xxix. 13.

constancy and the mutability of the other. And this doth seem to have been the very cause why St. John doth so peculiarly term the doctrine that teacheth salvation by Jesus Christ, *1 Evangelium æternum*, "an eternal Gospel;" because there can be no reason wherefore the publishing thereof should be taken away, and any other instead of it proclaimed, as long as the world doth continue: whereas the whole law of rites and ceremonies, although delivered with so great solemnity, is notwithstanding clean abrogated, inasmuch as it had but temporary cause of God's ordaining it.

[4.] But that we may at the length conclude this first general introduction unto the nature and original birth, as of all other laws, so likewise of those which the sacred Scripture containeth, concerning the Author whereof even infidels have confessed that He can neither err nor deceive<sup>2</sup>: albeit about things easy and manifest unto all men by common sense there needeth no higher consultation; because as a man whose wisdom is in weighty affairs admired would take it in some disdain to have his counsel solemnly asked about a toy, so the meanness of some things is such, that to search the Scripture of God for the ordering of them were to derogate from the reverend authority and dignity of the Scripture, no less than they do by whom Scriptures are in ordinary talk very idly applied unto vain and childish trifles: yet better it were to be superstitious than profane; to take from thence our direction even in all things great or small, than to wade through matters of principal weight and moment, without ever caring what the law of God hath either for or against our designs. Concerning the custom of the very Painims, thus much Strabe witnesseth: "Men that are civil do lead their lives after one common law appointing them what to do. For that otherwise a multitude should with harmony amongst themselves concur in the doing of one thing, (for this is civilly to live,) or that they should in any sort manage community of life, it is not possible. Now laws or statutes are of two sorts. For they are either received from gods, or else from men.

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. xiv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Κομιδὴ ἄρα ὁ Θεὸς ἀπλοῦν καὶ ἐξαπατᾷ, οὔτε κατὰ φαντασίας οὔτε κατὰ λόγους οὔτε κατὰ σημείων πομπῶν ἀληθῆς ἔν τε ἔργῳ καὶ ἐν λόγῳ, καὶ πᾶς, οὐθ' ἕναρ οὐτ' ὄναρ. Plat. in fine 2 Polit. [p. 382 E.]

BOOK I.  
Ch. xv. 4.

“And our ancient predecessors did surely most honour and reverence that which was from the gods; for which cause consultation with oracles was a thing very usual and frequent in their times<sup>1</sup>.” Did they make so much account of the voice of their gods, which in truth were no gods; and shall we neglect the precious benefit of conference with those oracles of the true and living God, whereof so great store is left to the Church, and whereunto there is so free, so plain, and so easy access for all men? “By thy commandments<sup>2</sup>” (this was David’s confession unto God) “thou hast made me wiser than mine enemies.” Again, “I have had more understanding than all my teachers, because thy testimonies are my meditations.” What pains would not they have bestowed in the study of these books, who travelled sea and land to gain the treasure of some few days’ talk with men whose wisdom the world did make any reckoning of? That little which some of the heathens did chance to hear, concerning such matter as the sacred Scripture plentifully containeth, they did in wonderful sort affect; their speeches<sup>3</sup> as oft as they make mention thereof are strange, and such as themselves could not utter as they did other things, but still acknowledged that their wits, which did every where else conquer hardness, were with profoundness here over-matched. Wherefore seeing that God hath endued us with sense, to the end that we might perceive such things as this present life doth need; and with reason, lest that which sense cannot reach unto, being both now and also in regard of a future estate hereafter necessary to be known, should lie obscure; finally, with the heavenly support of prophetic revelation, which doth open those hidden mysteries that reason could never have been able to find out<sup>4</sup>, or to have known the

<sup>1</sup> Πολιτικοὶ ὄντες ἀπὸ προστάγματος κοινου ζῶσιν. Ἄλλως γὰρ οὐχ οἶόν τε τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐν τι κατὰ ταῦτό ποιεῖν ἡρμοσμένως ἀλλήλοις (ὅπερ ἦν τὸ πολιτεύεσθαι), καὶ ἄλλως πως νέμειν βίον κοινόν. Τὸ δὲ πρόσταγμα διττόν· ἢ γὰρ παρὰ θεῶν, ἢ παρὰ ἀνθρώπων. Καὶ οἱ γε ἀρχαῖοι τὸ παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἐπίσθρευον μᾶλλον καὶ ἐνέμνον· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ χρησθηριαζόμενος ἦν τότε πολὺς. Strab. Geogr. lib. xvi. [c. 38. t. vi. p. 361, Lips. 1811.]

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxix. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Orphei Carmina. [Cf. quotation in iv. 1. and fragments in Justin M. *ad Gentes*. 15, Euseb. Prop. xiii. 12, Proclus in Timæum, &c., printed in the Tauchnitz ed. of the Orphica, 1829, pp. 133-139.—1886.]

<sup>4</sup> Ἐάν γὰρ ὁ νοῦς ἀπολείπεται, πρὸς ταῦθ' ἡ προφητεία φθάνει. Philo de Mos. [lib. ii. in init. p. 655. Paris, 1640.]

necessity of them unto our everlasting good: use we the precious gifts of God unto his glory and honour that gave them, seeking by all means to know what the will of our God is; what righteous before him; in his sight what holy, perfect, and good, that we may truly and faithfully do it.

XVI. Thus far therefore we have endeavoured in part to open, of what nature and force laws are, according unto their several kinds; the law which God with himself hath eternally set down to follow in his own works; the law which he hath made for his creatures to keep; the law of natural and necessary agents; the law which angels in heaven obey; the law whereunto by the light of reason men find themselves bound in that they are men; the law which they make by composition for multitudes and politic societies of men to be guided by; the law which belongeth unto each nation; the law that concerneth the fellowship of all; and lastly the law which God himself hath supernaturally revealed. It might peradventure have been more popular and more plausible to vulgar ears, if this first discourse had been spent in extolling the force of laws, in shewing the great necessity of them when they are good, and in aggravating their offence by whom public laws are injuriously traduced. But forasmuch as with such kind of matter the passions of men are rather stirred one way or other, than their knowledge any way set forward unto the trial of that whereof there is doubt made; I have therefore turned aside from that beaten path, and chosen though a less easy yet a more profitable way in regard of the end we propose. Lest therefore any man should marvel whereunto all these things tend, the drift and purpose of all is this, even to shew in what manner, as every good and perfect gift, so this very gift of good and perfect laws is derived from the Father of lights<sup>1</sup>; to teach men a reason why just and reasonable laws are of so great force, of so great use in the world; and to inform their minds with some method of reducing the laws whereof there is present controversy unto their first original causes, that so it may be in every particular ordinance thereby the better discerned, whether the same be reasonable, just, and righteous, or no. Is there any thing which can either be thoroughly understood or soundly judged of, till the very first causes and principles from which originally

BOOK I.  
Ch. xvi. 1.

A conclusion shewing how all this belongeth to the cause in question.

<sup>1</sup> James i. 17.