

BOOK IV.
Ch. vi. 3.

things were usual amongst those nations, and in themselves they are indifferent. But are they indifferent being used as signs of immoderate and hopeless lamentation for the dead? In this sense it is that the law forbiddeth them. For which cause the very next words following are, "Ye shall not cut your flesh for the dead, nor make any print of a mark upon you: I am the Lord¹." The like in Leviticus, where speech is of mourning for the dead; "They shall not make bald parts upon their head, nor shave off the locks of their beard, nor make any cutting in their flesh²." Again in Deuteronomy, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God; ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make you baldness between your eyes for the dead³." What is this but in effect the same which the Apostle doth more plainly express, saying, "Sorrow not as they do who have no hope⁴?" The very light of nature itself was able to see herein a fault; that which those nations did use, having been also in use with others, the ancient Roman laws do forbid⁵. That shaving therefore and cutting which the law doth mention was not a matter in itself indifferent, and forbidden only because it was in use amongst such idolaters as were neighbours to the people of God; but to use it had been a crime, though no other people or nation under heaven should have done it saving only themselves.

As for those laws concerning attire: "There shall no garment of linen and woollen come upon thee⁶;" as also those touching food and diet, wherein swine's flesh together with sundry other meats are forbidden⁷; the use of these things had been indeed of itself harmless and indifferent: so that hereby it doth appear, how the law of God forbade in some special consideration such things as were lawful enough in themselves. But yet even here they likewise fail of that they intend. For it doth not appear that the consideration in regard whereof the law forbiddeth these things was because those nations did use them. Likely enough it is that the

¹ Levit. xix. 28.² Levit. xxi. 5.³ Deut. xiv. 1.⁴ 1 Thess. iv. 13.⁵ [Cic. Tusc. Quæst. ii. 23. "In-gemiscere nonnunquam viro con-cessum est, idque raro: ejulatus

ne mulieri quidem: et hic nimirum est lessus, quem duodecim tabulæ in funeribus adhiberi vetuerunt."

⁶ Levit. xix. 19; Deut. xxii. 11.⁷ Deut. xiv. 7; Levit. xi.BOOK IV.
Ch. vii. 1.

Canaanites used to feed as well on sheep's as on swine's flesh; and therefore if the forbidding of the later had no other reason than dissimilitude with that people, they which of their own heads allege this for reason can shew I think some reason more than we are able to find why the former was not also forbidden. Might there not be some other mystery in this prohibition than they think of? Yes, some other mystery there was in it by all likelihood. For what reason is there which should but induce, and therefore much less enforce us to think, that care of dissimilitude between the people of God and the heathen nations about them, was any more the cause of forbidding them to put on garments of sundry stuff, than of charging them withal not to sow their fields with meslin¹; or that this was any more the cause of forbidding them to eat swine's flesh, than of charging them withal not to eat the flesh of eagles, hawks, and the like²?

Wherefore, although the church of Rome were to us, as to Israel the Egyptians and Canaanites were of old; yet doth it not follow, that the wisdom of God without respect doth teach us to erect between us and them a partition-wall of difference³, in such things indifferent as have been hitherto disputed of.

VII. Neither is the example of the eldest churches a whit more available to this purpose. Notwithstanding some fault undoubtedly there is in the very resemblance of idolaters⁴. Were it not some kind of blemish to be like unto infidels and heathens, it would not so usually be objected; men would not think it any advantage in the causes of religion to be able therewith justly to charge their adversaries as they do. Wherefore to the end that it may a little more plainly appear, what force this hath and how far the same extendeth, we are to note how all men are naturally desirous that they may seem neither to judge nor to do amiss; because every error and offence is a stain to the beauty of nature, for which cause

¹ Levit. xix. 19. ["Meslin: mixt corn, as wheat and rye." Johnson, quoting Tusser:"If work for the Thresher ye mind for
"to have,"Of wheat and of meslin unthreshed go
"save."]² Deut. xiv; Levit. xi.³ Ephes. ii. 14.⁴ "The councils, although they did not observe themselves always in making of decrees this rule, yet have kept this consideration continually in making of their laws, that they would have Christians differ from others in their ceremonies." T. C. lib. i. p. 132.

That the example of the eldest churches is not herein against us.

BOOK IV. it blusheth thereat, but glorieth in the contrary. From thence
Ch. vii. 2. it riseth, that they which disgrace or depress the credit of
others do it either in both or in one of these. To have been
in either directed by a weak and unperfect rule argueth imbecility and imperfection. Men being either led by reason or by imitation of other men's example, if their persons be odious whose example we choose to follow, as namely if we frame our opinions to that which condemned heretics think, or direct our actions according to that which is practised and done by them; it lieth as an heavy prejudice against us, unless somewhat mightier than their bare example did move us, to think or do the same things with them. Christian men therefore having besides the common light of all men so great help of heavenly direction from above, together with the lamps of so bright examples as the Church of God doth yield, it cannot but worthily seem reproachful for us to leave both the one and the other, to become disciples unto the most hateful sort that live, to do as they do, only because we see their example before us and have a delight to follow it. Thus we may therefore safely conclude, that it is not evil simply to concur with the heathens either in opinion or in action; and that conformity with them is only then a disgrace, when either we follow them in that they think and do amiss, or follow them generally in that they do without other reason than only the liking we have to the pattern of their example; which liking doth intimate a more universal approbation of them than is allowable.

[2.] Faustus the Manichee therefore objecting against the Jews, that they forsook the idols of the Gentiles, but their temples and oblations and altars and priesthoods and all kinds of ministry of holy things they exercised even as the Gentiles did, yea, more superstitiously a great deal; against the Catholic Christians likewise, that between them and the heathens there was in many things little difference; "From them," saith Faustus, "ye have learned to hold that one only God is the author of all; their sacrifices ye have turned into feasts of charity, their idols into martyrs whom ye honour with the like religious offices unto theirs; the ghosts of the dead ye appease with wine and delicates; the festival days of the nations ye celebrate together with them; and of their kind

"of life ye have verily changed nothing¹." St. Augustine's defence in behalf of both is, that touching matters of action, Jews and Catholic Christians were free from the Gentiles' faultiness, even in those things which were objected as tokens of their agreement with Gentiles²: and concerning their consent in opinion, they did not hold the same with Gentiles because Gentiles had so taught, but because heaven and earth had so witnessed the same to be truth, that neither the one sort could err in being fully persuaded thereof, nor the other but err in case they should not consent with them³.

[3.] In things of their own nature indifferent, if either councils or particular men have at any time with sound judgment misliked conformity between the Church of God and infidels, the cause thereof hath been somewhat else than only affectation of dissimilitude. They saw it necessary so to do in respect of some special accident, which the Church being not always subject unto hath not still cause to do the like. For example, in the dangerous days of trial, wherein there was no way for the truth of Jesus Christ to triumph over infidelity but through the constancy of his saints, whom yet a natural desire to save themselves from the flame might peradventure cause to join with Pagans in external customs, too far using the same as a cloak to conceal themselves in, and a mist to darken the eyes of infidels withal: for remedy hereof those laws it might be were provided, which forbad that Christians should deck their houses with boughs as the Pagans did use to do⁴, or rest those festival days whereon

¹ August. cont. Faust. Manich. lib. xx. cap. 4. [t. viii. 334. "Schisma aut nihil immutare debet ab eo unde factum est, aut non multum: ut puta vos, qui desciscentes a gentibus, monarchiæ opinionem primo vobiscum divisistis, id est, ut omnia credatis ex Deo: sacrificia vero eorum vertistis in agapes, idola in martyres, quos votis similibus colitis: defunctorum umbras vino placatis et dapibus: solennes gentium dies cum ipsis celebratis, ut kalendas, et solstitia: de vita certe eorum mutastis nihil."]

² [Ibid. § 23. "Si usus quarundam rerum similis videtur

"nobis esse cum gentibus, sicut cibi et potus, tectorum, vestimentorum, &c. . . . longe tamen aliter his rebus utitur, qui ad alium finem usum earum refert; et aliter qui ex his Deo gratias agit, de quo prava et falsa non credit."]

³ [Ibid. § 19. "Discat ergo Faustus, . . . monarchiæ opinionem non ex gentibus nos habere; sed gentes non usque adeo ad falsos Deos esse delapsos, ut opinionem amitterent unius veri Dei, ex quo est omnis qualiscunque natura."]

⁴ "Also it was decreed in another council that they should not deck their houses with bay-leaves

BOOK IV. the Pagans rested, or celebrate such feasts as were, though
Ch. vii. 4, 5. not heathenish, yet such as the simpler sort of heathens might
be beguiled in so thinking them.

[4.] As for Tertullian's judgment concerning the rites and orders of the Church, no man having judgment can be ignorant how just exceptions may be taken against it¹. His opinion touching the Catholic Church was as unindifferent as touching our church the opinion of them that favour this pretended reformation is. He judged all them who did not Montanize to be but carnally minded, he judged them still over-abstractly to fawn upon the heathens, and to curry favour with infidels. Which as the catholic church did well provide that they might not do indeed, so Tertullian over-often through discontentment carpeeth injuriously at them as though they did it, even when they were free from such meaning.

[5.] But if it were so, that either the judgment of these councils before alleged, or of Tertullian himself against the Christians, are in no such consideration to be understood as we have mentioned; if it were so that men are condemned as well of the one as of the other, only for using the ceremonies of a religion *contrary* unto their own, and that *this cause* is such as ought to prevail no less with us than with them: shall it not follow that seeing there is still between our religion and Paganism the selfsame *contrariety*, therefore we are still no less rebukeable, if we now deck our houses with boughs, or send new-year's gifts unto our friends, or feast on those days which the Gentiles then did, or sit after prayer as they were accustomed? For so they infer upon the premises, that as great difference as commodiously may be, there should be in all outward ceremonies between the people of God and them which are not his people. Again they teach as hath been declared, that there is not as great a difference

"and green boughs, because the Pagans did use so; and that they should not rest from their labour those days that the Pagans did, that they should not keep the first day of every month as they did." T. C. l. i. p. 132. [103.]

¹ "Tertullian saith, O, saith he, better is the religion of the heathen; for they use no solemnity of the Christians, neither the

"Lord's day, neither, &c. but we are not afraid to be called heathen." T. C. l. i. p. 132. [103.] "But having shewed this in general to be the policy of God first, and of his people afterward, to put as much difference as can be commodiously between the people of God and others which are not, I shall not, &c." T. C. l. i. p. 133.

as may be between them, except the one do avoid whatsoever rites and ceremonies uncommanded of God the other doth embrace. So that generally they teach that the very difference of spiritual condition itself between the servants of Christ and others requireth such difference in ceremonies between them, although the one be never so far disjoined in time or place from the other.

[6.] But in case the people of God and Belial do chance to be neighbours, then as the danger of infection is greater, so the same difference they say is thereby made more necessary¹. In this respect as the Jews were severed from the heathen, so most especially from the heathen nearest them. And in the same respect we, which ought to differ howsoever from the church of Rome, are now they say by reason of our nearness more bound to differ from them in ceremonies than from Turks. A strange kind of speech unto Christian ears, and such as I hope they themselves do acknowledge unadvisedly uttered. "We are not so much to fear infection from Turks as from papists." What of that? we must remember that by conforming rather ourselves in that respect to Turks, we should be spreaders of a worse infection into others than any we are likely to draw from papists by our conformity with them in ceremonies. If they did hate, as Turks do, the Christians; or as Canaanites did of old the Jewish religion even in gross; the circumstance of local nearness in them unto us might haply enforce in us a duty of greater separation from them than from those other mentioned. But forasmuch as papists are so much in Christ nearer unto us than Turks, is there any reasonable man, trow you, but will judge it meeter that our ceremonies of Christian religion should be popish than Turkish or heathenish? Especially considering that we were not brought to dwell amongst them, (as Israel in Canaan,) having not been of them. For even a very part of them we were. And when God did by his good Spirit put it into our hearts, first to reform ourselves, (whence grew our separation,) and then by all good means to seek also their reformation; had we not only cut off their corruptions but also estranged ourselves from them in things indifferent, who seeth not how greatly prejudicial this might have been to

¹ [Decl. of Discipl. 134.]

BOOK IV. so good a cause, and what occasion it had given them to think
Ch. viii. 1. (to their greater obduration in evil) that through a froward or
wanton desire of innovation we did unconstrainedly those
things for which conscience was pretended? Howsoever
the case doth stand, as Juda had been rather to choose
conformity in things indifferent with Israel when they were
nearest opposites, than with the farthest removed Pagans;
so we in the like case much rather with papists than with
Turks. I might add further for more full and complete
answer, so much concerning the large odds between the case
of the eldest churches in regard of those heathens and ours in
respect of the church of Rome, that very cavillation itself
should be satisfied, and have no shift to fly unto.

That it is
not our best
policy for
the esta-
blishment
of sound
religion,
to have
in these
things no
agreement
with the
church of
Rome
being
unsound.

VIII. But that no one thing may detain us over long,
I return to their reasons against our conformity with that
church. That extreme dissimilitude which they urge upon
us, is now commended as our best and safest policy for esta-
blishment of sound religion. The ground of which politic
position is that "evils must be cured by their contraries;"
and therefore the cure of the Church infected with the poison
of Antichristianity must be done by that which is thereunto
as contrary as may be¹. "A medled estate of the orders of
"the Gospel and the ceremonies of popery is not the best
"way to banish popery²."

We are contrariwise of opinion, that he which will perfectly
recover a sick and restore a diseased body unto health, must
not endeavour so much to bring it to a state of simple con-
trariety, as of fit proportion in contrariety unto those evils
which are to be cured. He that will take away extreme heat
by setting the body in extremity of cold, shall undoubtedly
remove the disease, but together with it the diseased too.
The first thing therefore in skilful cures is the knowledge of
the part affected; the next is of the evil which doth affect it;
the last is not only of the kind but also of the measure of
contrary things whereby to remove it.

¹ "Common reason also doth
"teach that contraries are cured
"by their contraries. Now Christ-
"ianity and Antichristianity, the
"Gospel and Popery, be contra-
"ries; and therefore Antichristianity
"must be cured, not by itself, but
"by that which is (as much as may
"be) contrary unto it." T. C. l. i.
p. 134. [103.]
² [T. C. i. 103.]

[2.] They which measure religion by dislike of the church
of Rome think every man so much the more sound, by how
much he can make the corruptions thereof to seem more
large. And therefore some there are, namely the Arians in
reformed churches of Poland, which imagine the canker to
have eaten so far into the very bones and marrow of the
church of Rome, as if it had not so much as a sound belief,
no not concerning God himself, but that the very belief of the
Trinity were a part of antichristian corruption¹; and that
the wonderful providence of God did bring to pass that the
bishop of the see of Rome should be famous for his triple
crown; a sensible mark whereby the world might know him
to be that mystical beast spoken of in the Revelation, to be
that great and notorious Antichrist in no one respect so much
as in this, that he maintaineth the doctrine of the Trinity.
Wisdom therefore and skill is requisite to know, what parts
are sound in that church, and what corrupted.

Neither is it to all men apparent which complain of unsound
parts, with what kind of unsoundness every such part is
possessed. They can say, that in doctrine, in discipline,
in prayers, in sacraments, the church of Rome hath (as it
hath indeed) very foul and gross corruptions; the nature
whereof notwithstanding because they have not for the most
part exact skill and knowledge to discern, they think that
amiss many times which is not; and the salve of reformation
they mightily call for, but where and what the sores are which
need it, as they wot full little, so they think it not greatly
material to search. Such men's contentment must be wrought
by stratagem; the usual method of art is not for them.

[3.] But with those that profess more than ordinary and
common knowledge of good from evil, with them that are
able to put a difference between things naught and things
indifferent in the church of Rome, we are yet at controversy
about the manner of removing that which is naught; whether
it may not be perfectly helped, unless that also which is
indifferent be cut off with it, so far till no rite or ceremony
remain which the church of Rome hath, being not found
in the word of God. If we think this too extreme, they reply,
that to draw men from great excess, it is not amiss though we

¹ [See book V. c. xlii. 16.]

use them unto somewhat less than is competent¹; and that a crooked stick is not straightened unless it be bent as far on the clean contrary side, that so it may settle itself at the length in a middle estate of evenness between both. But how can these comparisons stand them in any stead? When they urge us to extreme opposition against the church of Rome, do they mean we should be drawn unto it only for a time, and afterwards return to a mediocrity? or was it the purpose of those reformed churches, which utterly abolished all popish ceremonies, to come in the end back again to the middle point of evenness and moderation? Then have we conceived amiss of their meaning. For we have always thought their opinion to be, that utter inconformity with the church of Rome was not an extremity whereunto we should be drawn for a time, but the very mediocrity itself wherein they meant we should ever continue. Now by these comparisons it seemeth clean contrary, that howsoever they have bent themselves at first to an extreme contrariety against the Romish church, yet therein they will continue no longer than only till such time as some more moderate course for establishment of the Church may be concluded.

[4.] Yea, albeit this were not at the first their intent, yet surely now there is great cause to lead them unto it. They have seen that experience of the former policy, which may cause the authors of it to hang down their heads. When Germany had stricken off that which appeared corrupt in the doctrine of the church of Rome, but seemed nevertheless in discipline still to retain therewith very great conformity; France by that rule of policy which hath been before mentioned, took away the popish orders which Germany did retain. But process of time hath brought more light into the world; whereby men perceiving that they of the religion in France have also retained some orders which were before

¹ "If a man would bring a drunken man to sobriety, the best and nearest way is to carry him as far from his excess in drink as may be; and if a man could not keep a mean, it were better to fault in prescribing less than he should drink, than to fault in giving him more than he ought. As we see, to bring a stick which is crooked

"to be straight, we do not only bow it so far until it come to be straight, but we bend it so far until we make it so crooked of the other side as it was before of the first side; to this end, that at the last it may stand straight, and as it were in the midway between both the crooks." T. C. lib. i. p. 132. [103.]

in the church of Rome, and are not commanded in the word of God, there hath arisen a sect¹ in England, which following still the very selfsame rule of policy, seeketh to reform even the French reformation, and purge out from thence also dregs of popery. These have not taken as yet such root that they are able to establish any thing. But if they had, what would spring out of their stock, and how far the unquiet wit of man might be carried with rules of such policy, God doth know. The trial which we have lived to see, may somewhat teach us what posterity is to fear. But our Lord of his infinite mercy avert whatsoever evil our swervings on the one hand or on the other may threaten unto the state of his Church!

IX. That the church of Rome doth hereby take occasion to blaspheme, and to say, our religion is not able to stand of itself unless it lean upon the staff of their ceremonies², is not a matter of so great moment, that it did need to be objected, or doth deserve to receive an answer. The name of blasphemy in this place, is like the shoe of Hercules on a child's foot³. If the church of Rome do use any such kind of silly exprobration, it is no such ugly thing to the ear, that we should think the honour and credit of our religion to receive thereby any great wound. They which hereof make so perilous a matter do seem to imagine, that we have erected of late a frame of some new religion, the furniture whereof we should not have borrowed from our enemies, lest they relieving us might afterwards laugh and gibe at our poverty; whereas in truth the ceremonies which we have taken from such as were before us, are not things that belong to this or that sect, but they are the ancient rites and customs of the Church of Christ, whereof ourselves being a part, we have the selfsame interest in them which our fathers before us had, from whom the same are descended unto us. Again, in case we had been so much beholding privately unto them, doth the reputation to one church stand by saying unto another,

¹ [The Brownists, or Barrowists.] "monies." T. C. lib. iii. p. 178.

² "By using of these ceremonies, the Papists take occasion to blaspheme, saying, that our religion cannot stand by itself, unless it lean upon the staff of their ceremonies." [and i. 52.]

³ ["Herculis cothurnos aptare infanti." See Quintilian VI. i. 3. and Erasm. Adag. Chil. iii. Cent. vi. Prov. 67.]

That we are not to abolish our ceremonies, either because papists upbraid us as having taken from them, or for that they are said hereby to conceive I know not what great hopes.