



# The Doctrine of the Fall

William Cunningham



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The decrees and canons of the Council of Trent exhibit the solemn and official judgment of the Church of Rome, which claims to be regarded as the one holy, catholic church of Christ, on the principal doctrines which were deduced by the Reformers from the word of God. The first decision of the council upon doctrinal controversial points is that which treats of the rule of faith; but on the consideration of this subject I do not intend to enter. The next was the decree of the fifth session, which professes to treat of original sin; and to the consideration of this topic, in so far as it formed a subject of discussion between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, I propose now to direct attention.

## **I. Popish and Protestant Views**

The phrase Original Sin, —peccatum originis, or peccatum originate, —is used by theologians in two different senses; the things, however, described by it in the two cases differing from each other only as a part does from a whole, and the words, consequently, being used either in a more extended or in a more restricted sense. Sometimes the phrase is employed as a general comprehensive description of all the different

elements or ingredients that constitute the sinfulness of the state into which man, through Adam's transgression, fell; and sometimes as denoting only the moral corruption or depravity of his nature, the inherent and universal bias or tendency of man, as he comes into the world, to violate God's laws, which, being the immediate or proximate cause of all actual transgressions, constitutes practically the most important and fundamental feature of his natural condition of sinfulness. It is in this latter and more restricted sense that the phrase is most commonly employed, and it is in this sense that it is used in the standards of our church. The words original sin, indeed, are not directly used in the Confession of Faith, but they occur both in the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms; and though, in the Shorter Catechism, it might be doubted, as a mere question of grammatical construction, whether the words, "which is commonly called original sin," applied only to the "corruption of his whole nature," which is the immediate antecedent, or included also the other ingredient or constituent elements of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which had been also previously mentioned, —viz., the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the want of original righteousness, —yet any ambiguity in this respect is removed in the fuller exposition given under the corresponding question in the Larger Catechism, where it is plain that the statement made as to the common meaning of the words "original sin," applies it only to the corruption of our nature, —the inherent depravity which is the immediate source of actual transgressions. This observation, however, regards only the meaning of a particular phrase, for the whole of the elements or ingredients of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, are usually expounded and discussed in systems of theology under the general head *De Peccato*; and it is impossible fully to understand the doctrine of Scripture in regard to any one division or department of the subject, without having respect to what it teaches concerning the rest.

The subject of the moral character and condition of man, both before and after the fall, —treated commonly by modern continental writers under the designation of Anthropology, —was very fully discussed by the schoolmen; and in their hands the doctrine of Scripture, as expounded by Augustine, had been very greatly corrupted, and the real effects of the fall — the sinfulness of man's natural condition— had been very much

explained away. The doctrine which was generally taught in the Church of Rome, at the commencement of the Reformation, upon this subject, the Reformers condemned as unscriptural, —as Pelagian in its character, —as tending towards rendering the work of Christ, and the whole arrangements of the scheme of redemption, unnecessary and superfluous, —and as laying a foundation for men's either effecting their own salvation, or at least meriting at God's hand the grace that is necessary for accomplishing this result. And yet, when the Reformers explained their doctrine upon this subject, in the Confession of Augsburg and other documents, the Romanists professed that they did not differ very materially from it, except in one point, to be afterwards noticed; and on several occasions, when conferences were held, with the view of bringing about a reconciliation or adjustment between the parties, there was much that seemed to indicate that they might have come to an agreement upon this point, so far as concerned the terms in which the substance of the doctrine should be expressed. The substance, indeed, of what the Scriptures teach, and of what the Reformers proclaimed, in regard to the bearing of Adam's fall upon his posterity, and the natural state and condition of man as fallen, had been so fully brought out by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, and had through his influence been so generally received and professed by the church of the fifth and sixth centuries, that it was quite impossible for the Church of Rome, unless she openly and avowedly renounced her professed principle of following the authority of the fathers and the tradition of the early church, to deviate far from the path of sound doctrine upon this subject. It was, however, no easy matter to combine, in any decision upon this subject, the different and sometimes not very compatible, objects which the Council of Trent usually laboured to keep in view in its doctrinal deliverances, —viz., to condemn the doctrines of the Reformers, and to avoid as much as possible condemning either Augustine or the leading schoolmen, who still had their followers in the Church of Rome, and in the council itself.

Their decree upon this subject consists of five sections, of which the first three are directed only against the Pelagians, and are acknowledged by Protestants to contain scriptural truth, so far as they go, —though they are defective and somewhat ambiguous; the fourth is directed against the

Anabaptists; while the fifth alone strikes upon any position which had been generally maintained by the Reformers, and is still generally held by Protestant churches. The Protestants exposed the unreasonableness and folly of the council beginning its doctrinal decisions with a condemnation of heresies which had been condemned by the church for above a thousand years; and which, except in the article of the denial of infant baptism, had not been revived by any in the course of those theological discussions on which the council was avowedly called upon to decide. "Quorsum obsecro," says Calvin upon this very point, —for we have the privilege of having from his pen what he calls an " Antidote" to the proceedings of the first seven sessions of the council, those held under Paul III, a work of very great interest and value, —" Quorsum obsecro attinebat tot anathemata detonare, nisi ut imperiti crederent aliquid subesse causae cum tamen nihil sit." Although Protestants have admitted that the first four sections of the decree of the Council of Trent are sound and scriptural, so far as they go, and could be rejected, in substance at least, only by Pelagians and Anabaptists, they have usually complained of them as giving a very defective account, or more properly no account at all, of the real nature and constituent elements of original sin, or rather of the sinfulness of man's natural condition in consequence of the fall. This complaint is undoubtedly well founded; and the true reason why the subject was left in this very loose and unsatisfactory condition was, that a considerable diversity of opinion upon these points prevailed in the council itself, and the fathers were afraid to give any deliverance regarding them. Indeed, upon this very occasion, Father Paul, —from whose narrative Hallam, as we have seen, formed so favourable an opinion of the ability and learning of the council, and of the desire of truth by which its members were actuated, —tells us that, while some members strongly urged that it was unworthy of a general council to put forth a mere condemnation of errors upon so important a subject, without an explicit statement of the opposite truths, the generality of the bishops (few of whom, he says, were skilled in theology) were not able to comprehend the discussions in which the theologians indulged in their presence, about the nature and constituent elements of men's natural condition of sinfulness, and were very anxious that the decrees should contain a mere rejection of errors, without a positive statement of truth, and should be expressed in such vague and general terms as should

contain no deliverance upon these knotty points, lest they should do mischief by their decision, without being aware of it. So that it would seem that the honest ignorance and stupidity of the great body of the members of the council contributed, as well as reasons of policy, to the formation of the decree upon original sin, in the vague and unsatisfactory form in which we find it.

The council began their investigation of each doctrinal topic by collecting from the writings of the Reformers a number of propositions, which appeared to them *prima facie* erroneous, in order that their truth might be carefully examined and decided upon; and it is remarkable, that in the propositions selected from the writings of the Reformers to be the groundwork of the decree on original sin, as given by Father Paul, there are several important doctrines laid down in regard to the nature and constituent elements of man's natural and original sinfulness, on which, in the decree ultimately adopted by the council, no decision, favourable or unfavourable, was pronounced.

The substance of the scriptural truth taught by the Council of Trent, — and, of course, still professedly held by the Church of Rome, — on the subject of original sin, in opposition to the Pelagians, is this: that Adam's first sin caused or effected a most important and injurious change upon the moral character and condition of himself and of his posterity; that he thereby lost the holiness and righteousness which he had received from God, and lost it not for himself alone, but also for us; that he transmitted (*transfudisse*) to the whole human race not only temporal death, and other bodily sufferings of a penal kind, but also sin, which is the death of the soul; and that the ruinous effects of the fall upon man's moral and spiritual condition cannot be repaired by any powers of human nature, or by any other remedy except the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, all this is true, or accordant with the word of God; and it has been held by all Protestants, except those whom Protestants have usually regarded as not entitled to the name of Christians, — I mean the Socinians. The truth thus declared by the Council of Trent might be fairly enough regarded as embracing the sum and substance, the leading and essential features, of what is made known to us in Scripture with respect to the fall of man, and its bearing upon his moral condition; and Calvin, accordingly, in his

Antidote, did not charge the doctrine of the council, thus far, even with being defective. Indeed, it may be remarked, in general, that the first Reformers did not speculate very largely or minutely upon the more abstract questions directly comprehended under the subject of original sin, being mainly anxious about some important inferences deducible from man's natural state of sinfulness, which bore more directly upon the topics of free-will, grace, and merit; though it is also true, as I have already observed, that the fathers of Trent had before them certain doctrines taught by the Reformers, in regard to the nature of original sin, which they thought proper to pass by, without either approving or condemning them.

It came out, however, in the course of subsequent discussions, that certain corrupt notions in regard to original sin, which had been held by some of the schoolmen, but which seemed to be condemned, by implication at least, by the Council of Trent, were still taught by leading Popish divines, who contended that the council had intentionally abstained from deciding these questions— had used vague and general words on purpose— and had thus left free room for speculation and difference of opinion; and Protestant theologians were thus led to see that, even for the maintenance of the practical conclusions bearing upon the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit, —about which the Reformers were chiefly concerned, —a more minute and exact exposition of the nature and constituent elements of original sin was necessary. This, together with the discussions excited by the Synergistic controversy in the Lutheran church, and by the entire denial of original sin by the Socinians, towards the end of the sixteenth century, led to a fuller and more detailed investigation of the subject by Protestant divines, and produced those more minute and precise expositions of the real nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness, which are fully set forth in the writings of the great theologians of the seventeenth century, —which have since been generally embraced by orthodox churches, —and which the compilers of our standards regarded as so important, that they embodied them even in the Shorter Catechism, among the fundamental articles of Christian doctrine. There, the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell is declared to consist "in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature,

which (viz., the corruption of nature) is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it." As this doctrine, in substance, though certainly not so precisely and definitely expressed, was under the view of the Council of Trent, as having been taught by the Reformers, —and as one leading defect of the decree they adopted was, that it gave no explicit deliverance regarding it, —it is in entire accordance with our present object, and may not be unprofitable, to make a few explanatory observations upon this view of the nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness introduced by the fall.

## **II. Guilt of Adam's First Sin**

The first ingredient or constituent element of the sinfulness of man's natural condition, is the guilt of Adam's first sin. Now, the general meaning of this is, that men, as they come into the world, are, in point of fact, in such a position that the guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to them, or put down to their account; so that they are regarded and treated by God as if they themselves, each of them, had been guilty of the sin which Adam committed in eating the forbidden fruit. If this be indeed the case, then the guilt of Adam's first sin, imputed to his posterity or charged to their account, is an actual feature of their natural condition of sinfulness; and, from the nature of the case, it must be the origin and foundation of the other ingredients or constituent elements of this condition. If true at all, it is the first and most important thing that is true about men, that they sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression.

It is true, indeed, that, in a synthetic exposition of men's natural estate of sin, the attention would naturally be directed, in the first place, to the actual personal moral character and tendencies of men as they come into the world, and to the actual transgressions of God's law, of which they are all guilty, —a subject which is not so entirely one of pure revelation, on which a variety of evidence from different sources can be brought to bear, and in the investigation of which an appeal can be made for materials of proof more directly to men's own consciousness, and to experience and observation. But when the actual corruption and depravity of man's

moral nature, and the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, as certainly resulting from this feature of their natural character, are established from Scripture, consciousness, and experience, it must be evident that the doctrine that, in virtue of God's arrangements, the human race was federally represented by Adam, and was tried in him, — so that the guilt of his first sin is imputed to them, and they are in consequence regarded and treated by God as if they had themselves committed it, —is so far from introducing any additional difficulty into the matter, that it rather tends somewhat to elucidate and explain a subject which is undoubtedly difficult and mysterious, and in its full bearings lying beyond the cognizance of the human faculties. The federal connection subsisting between Adam and his posterity, —the bearing of his first transgression upon their moral character and condition, —the doctrine that God intended and regarded the trial of Adam as the trial of the human race, and imputed the guilt of his first sin to them, —is undoubtedly a matter of pure revelation, which men could never have discovered, unless God had made it known to them; but which, when once ascertained from Scripture, does go some length to explain and account for— to bring into greater conformity with principles which we can in some measure understand and estimate— -phenomena which actually exist, and which must be admitted, because their existence can be proved, even though no approach could be made towards explaining or accounting for them. And when it is ascertained from Scripture that all mankind sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression, then the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them, or held and reckoned as theirs, to the effect of making them legally responsible for its consequences, —legally liable to condemnation and punishment, —is naturally and properly placed first in an analytic exposition of the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

The imputation of the guilt or reatus of Adam's first sin to his posterity, as the basis and ground in fact, and the explanation or rationale pro tanto in speculative discussion, of their being involved in actual depravity, misery, and ruin, through his fall, was certainly not denied by the Council of Trent. On the contrary, it seems to be fairly implied or assumed in their decree, though it cannot be said to be very explicitly asserted. Indeed, the position which this doctrine held at that time in controversial discussion,

was materially different from that which it has generally occupied at subsequent periods; and some explanation of this point is necessary, in order to our understanding and estimating aright the statements of some of the Reformers on this subject. An impression generally prevails amongst us, —countenanced, perhaps, to a certain extent, by some of the aspects which the controversy on this subject has occasionally assumed in modern times, —that the doctrine that men are involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin, —that that sin was imputed to his posterity, —is the highest point of ultra-Calvinism, —a doctrine which the more moderate and reasonable Calvinists— including, it is often alleged, Calvin himself— rejected; and that it is the darkest and most mysterious view that has ever been presented of men's moral condition by nature; while yet the fact is certain, that, at the time of the Reformation, this doctrine was held by many Romanists, —by some of the theologians of the Council of Trent, who were not Calvinists, —and that it was applied by them for the purpose of softening and mitigating, or rather of explaining away, the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

It is true that there have been Calvinistic theologians who, admitting the entire corruption of the moral nature which men bring with them into the world, and the universality of actual transgression of God's law as certainly resulting from it, have not admitted the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and this fact has contributed to strengthen the impression which I have described. They have, however, taken up this position just because they have not discovered what they count sufficient evidence of this imputation in Scripture. Now, it is conceded that there is a greater variety and amount of positive evidence, not only from Scripture, but also from other sources, for the actual moral depravity of men's nature, and for the universality of actual sins in their conduct, than for the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity. It is also conceded that the admission of the existence and universal prevalence of a corrupt moral nature, —and, as a certain consequence of this, of actual transgressions, —in all men, is of greater practical importance, in its natural and legitimate bearing upon men's general views and impressions with respect to the scheme of salvation and their own immediate personal duty, than a belief of the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin. But it seems plain enough that the doctrine of the actual moral depravity of

men's nature, —certainly and invariably producing in all of them actual transgressions which subject them to God's wrath and curse, —as describing an actual feature of their natural condition, is really, when taken by itself, and unconnected with the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, in some respects more mysterious and incomprehensible than when the doctrine of imputation is received to furnish some explanation and account of it. The final appeal, of course, must be made to Scripture: the question must be decided by ascertaining whether or not the word of God teaches the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and on this we are not called upon here to enlarge. But there is certainly nothing more awful, or mysterious, or incomprehensible, in the one doctrine than in the other; and there is no ground whatever why the rejection of the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, as distinguished from that of their universal moral depravity as an actual feature in their condition, should be held to indicate, as many seem to suppose it does, moderation and caution, or an aversion to presumptuous and dangerous speculations.

The Council of Trent, though not giving any very explicit deliverance upon this subject, has at least left it free to Romanists to profess and maintain, if they choose, the views in regard to the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity which have been usually held by Calvinistic divines; and those Romish theologians who have made the nearest approach to sound Protestant doctrine upon other points, have uniformly spoken very much like Calvinists upon this point. Even Cardinal Bellarmine, though he showed no leaning to the comparatively sound theology taught in his own time by Baius, and more fully in the seventeenth century by Jansenius, has laid down positions upon this department of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which contain the whole substance of what the strictest Calvinists usually contend for. He expressly asserts that the first sin of Adam, "*omnibus imputatur, qui ex Adamo nascuntur, quoniam omnes in lumbis Adami existentes in eo, et per eum peccavimus, cum ipse peccavit;*" and again, "*in omnibus nobis, cum primum homines esse incipimus, praster imputationem inobedientiae Adami, esse etiam similem perversionem, et obliquitatem unicuique inhaerentem.*" Upon the assumption of taking *peccatum* to mean an actual transgression of God's law, he would define

the original sin of mankind to be "prima Adami inobedientia, ab ipso Adamo commissa, non ut erat singularis persona, sed ut personam totius generis humani gerebat;" and, lastly, he makes the following very important statement, most fully confirming one of the leading positions which we have endeavoured to illustrate: —"Nisienim ponamus, nos in Adamo, et cum Adamo vere peccasse, nulla ratione explicari poterit, quomodo in parvulis recens natis sit aliqua vera culpa: et hoc Catholicum dogma non tam supra rationem, quam contra rationem esse videbitur. Nam quidquid dicamus in parvulis ex peccato Adami haerere, sive reatum, sive aversionem, sive gratiae privationem, sive quid aliud; illud nullo modo parvulis vitio dari, ac ne esse quidem poterit, nisi processerit ab actione libera, cujus actionis illi aliquo modo participes fuerint." And, after reasoning at some length in support of this position, he concludes, — "Maneat igitur quod supra diximus, non posse in parvulis aliquid esse, quod habeat culpas rationem, nisi participes fuerint etiam ipsi praevaricationis Adae."

We propose now to notice the discussions which have subsequently taken place among Protestants as to the right mode of explaining the bearing of Adam's first sin upon the character and condition of his posterity; and from this we hope it will appear that those who have denied the doctrine of imputation in words, have either been obliged to admit it in substance, or else have fallen into greater difficulties in the exposition of their views than those which they were labouring to avoid.

That Adam's first sin exerted some influence upon the condition of his posterity, and that this influence was of an injurious or deteriorating kind, is so plainly taught in the Bible, that it has been admitted by all who have professed to believe in the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures, except Socinians and nationalists, whose denial of original sin in any sense, combined with their denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ, warrants us in asserting that, whatever they may sometimes profess or allege, they do not truly and honestly take the word of God for their guide. Modern nationalists indeed, to do them justice, admit frankly enough that the doctrine of original sin, including even the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, was plainly taught by the Apostle Paul; while they do not regard this as affording any sufficient reason why they should

believe it. Wegscheider admits that it is impossible, in accordance with the principles of philology and exegesis, to deny that Paul taught this doctrine; while yet he does not scruple to say, "Imputatio illa peccati Adamitici, quam Paulus Apostolus, sui temporis doctores Judaeos secutus, argumentationibus suis subjecit, ad obsoleta dogmata releganda est, quae et philosophiae et historiae ignorantia in magnum verge pietatis detrimentum per ecclesiam propagavit et aluit."

Among those, however, who have made a somewhat more credible profession of receiving the sacred Scriptures as a rule of faith, —and who, in consequence, have admitted the general position, that the fall of Adam exerted some injurious influence upon the condition of his posterity, — there has been a great diversity of opinion, both as to what the effects were which resulted from that event, and as to the nature of the connection subsisting between it and the effects which in some way or other flowed from it. Some have held that the only effect entailed by Adam's sin upon his posterity was temporal death, with the bodily infirmities and sufferings which lead to it, and the sorrows and afflictions which its universal prevalence implies or produces. Others have held that, in addition to this, it introduced, and in some way transmitted, a deteriorated moral nature, or otherwise placed men in more unfavourable circumstances; so that their discharge of the duties which God requires of them is more difficult than in Adam's case, and is marked to a greater extent, and more frequently, if not universally, by failure or shortcoming, than it would have been had Adam not fallen. And under this general head there is room for many gradations of sentiment as to the extent of the deterioration, the strength and prevalence of the tendencies and influences that lead men to commit sin, and involve them in the actual commission of it, —gradations approaching indefinitely near, either to the first view already explained, or to the third now about to be stated. A third class, believing in the entire corruption of the moral nature which all men bring with them into the world, and in the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, regard all this, upon the testimony of Scripture, as in some way or other caused or occasioned by Adam's sin. It is obvious enough that those who advocate the first two of these views, —comprehending almost all who are commonly classed under the name of Arminians, —have just ascribed to the fall of Adam as

much as they thought it could fairly and justly bear; and that, —as they felt constrained by the testimony of Scripture to regard as in some way or other connected with Adam's sin, whatever of sin and suffering actually existed among men, —they have been somewhat influenced in their views as to the actual facts or phenomena of men's condition, by certain notions as to the possibility of admitting Adam's sin as in some way explaining or accounting for them. This mode of contemplating the subject, however, is unreasonable, and is fitted to lead into error. The right mode of dealing with it is just to investigate, fully and unshrinkingly, the actual facts and phenomena of the case; to find out thoroughly and accurately, by a fair and fearless application of all competent means of information, what the moral character and condition of men are; and then to consider what can be ascertained as to the cause or origin of this state of things. There would not, we think, have been so many who would have denied that man's moral nature is at all corrupted, had it not been for the perverting influence of the impression that, consistently with justice, Adam could not have transmitted to his posterity any evils but such as were of a merely temporal character; and more would probably have yielded to the strength of the evidence from Scripture and observation in support of the entire depravity of men's moral nature, and the certainty and universality of actual transgressions, had it not been for the fancied difficulty of connecting in any way this state of things, if admitted, with the first sin of the first man.

We are not, however, at present considering the general subject of the actual moral character and condition of men by nature, but only the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the nature of the connection subsisting between that event and the effects which in some way flowed from it. And in doing so, we will assume for the present the truth of the third and last of the views we have stated, —that, viz., which, upon most abundant grounds, furnished both by Scripture and experience, represents the moral nature of men as wholly depraved, and as certainly leading, in every instance of a human being who attains to the age and condition of moral responsibility, to actual transgressions of God's law. We assume this at present, not merely because we think it can be conclusively proved to be the truth, —the actual state of the case, —a real phenomenon which exists, —which should be explained and accounted for, if possible, but

which must be admitted, whether it can be accounted for or not; but also because it is only upon the assumption that this is the actual state of the case, that the difficulty of accounting for it becomes serious and formidable, and because our chief object at present is merely to show that those who, admitting all this to be a reality, —as all Calvinistic divines, and some of the more evangelical Arminians, have done, —yet deny the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, do not thereby escape from any real difficulty, and only introduce greater darkness and mystery into the whole matter.

So long as men are regarded as being by nature exposed merely to temporal evils, or as being placed only in unfavourable moral circumstances, —which yet by their own strength, or by some universal grace, either actually furnished or at least made accessible to all men, they can overcome or escape from, —there is no great difficulty in explaining the whole matter by the undoubted right of God, as Creator and Governor of the world, who, all must admit, may give to His creatures different degrees of happiness and of privilege as He chooses, provided He does not make their existence upon the whole miserable, a curse and not a blessing, without their having furnished a ground for this by their own demerit. It is otherwise, however, if the case be as Calvinists maintain it is, — viz., that the moral character which all men bring with them into the world is such as certainly and necessarily to lead them into actual transgressions, which, unless divine grace specially interpose, subject them to God's wrath and curse, not only in the life that now is, but also in that which is to come. Here difficulties present themselves which we cannot but feel are not fully solved or explained by God's mere right, as Creator and Governor, to bestow different degrees of happiness and privilege upon His creatures. If the fact, indeed, as to the actual moral character and condition of men be once fully established, we may need to resolve it, for want of any further explanation, into the divine sovereignty; and even if we could in some measure explain it, —i.e., in the way of pushing the difficulty one or two steps further back, for that is really all that can be done on any theory, —we must resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty at last. Still, upon the Calvinistic view of the actual phenomena, the real state of the human race by nature, we cannot but feel that the mere right of God, as Creator, to bestow upon His creatures

different degrees of happiness and privilege, does not afford any real solution or explanation of the difficulty; and we are in consequence warranted to inquire if there be any other way of solving it, or of making any approach towards a solution of it.

There have, indeed, been a few Calvinistic divines, more remarkable for their boldness and ingenuity than for the soundness of their judgment, — and among others Dr Twisse, the prolocutor or president of the Westminster Assembly, — who have held that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the facts of the case and their certain results, the matter could be positively explained and vindicated by the principle of God's right to bestow different degrees of happiness and privilege upon His creatures, and have even ventured to take up the extraordinary ground, — the only one, indeed, on which their position can be maintained, — viz., that an eternal existence even in misery is a better and more desirable condition than non-existence or annihilation, and is thus, upon the whole, a blessing to the creature, and not a curse; and that, consequently, God may bestow it or effect it as a result of sovereignty, without its being necessary that there should be any previous ground in justice to warrant this. But this notion is so diametrically opposed at once to the common sense and the ordinary feelings of men, — and, what is of far more importance, to the explicit and most solemn and impressive declaration of our Saviour, "Good were it for that man that he had never been born," — that it has not been generally adopted by Calvinistic divines, and has only served the purpose of furnishing a handle to enemies.

Those, then, who hold the Calvinistic view of the state of the case with respect to the moral character and condition of men, may not unreasonably be asked whether they can give any other account of the origin, or any explanation of the cause, of this fearful state of things. Now, in the history of the discussions which have taken place upon this subject, we can trace four pretty distinct courses which have been taken by theologians who all admitted the total native depravity of mankind: First, some have refused to attempt any explanation of the state of the case, beyond the general statement that Scripture represents it as in some way or other connected with, and resulting from, the fall of Adam, and have denied, expressly or by plain implication, the common Calvinistic

doctrine of imputation. A second class, comprehending the great body of Calvinistic divines, have regarded it as, in some measure and to some extent, explained by the principle of its being a penal infliction upon men, resulting from the imputation to them of the guilt of Adam's first sin. A third class, while refusing to admit in words the doctrine of imputation, as commonly stated by orthodox divines, have yet put forth such views of the connection between Adam and his posterity, and of the bearing of his first sin upon them, as embody the sum and substance of all, or almost all, that the avowed defenders of the doctrine of imputation intend by it. And, lastly, there is a fourth class, who, while professing in words to hold the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, yet practically and substantially neutralize it or explain it away, especially by means of a distinction they have devised between immediate or antecedent, and mediate or consequent imputation, —denying the former, which is the only true and proper imputation, and admitting only the latter.

It is quite plain that it is only the first two of these four divisions of theological opinion that can be regarded as important, or even real and substantial. For, on the one hand, those who belong to the third class, though showing an unnecessary fastidiousness as to some portion of the general orthodox phraseology upon this point, and an unnecessary disposition to find fault with some of the details of the doctrine, and with some of the particular aspects in which it has been represented and explained, and thereby lending their aid to injure the interests of sound doctrine, may yet be really ranked under the second class, because they admit the whole substance of what the doctrine of imputation is usually understood to include or involve; while, on the other hand, those who belong to the fourth class, admitting imputation in words, but denying it in reality and substance, belong properly to the first class. Still it is true that these four distinct classes can be plainly enough traced in a survey of the history of the discussions which have taken place upon this subject. It is scarcely necessary to say, that all these various parties profess, while maintaining their different opinions, to be just giving forth the substance of what they respectively believe that Scripture teaches or indicates upon the subject, and that the points in dispute between them can be legitimately and conclusively decided only by a careful investigation of the true meaning of its statements. We are not called upon here to enter

upon this investigation, and can only make a few general observations upon the leading positions.

It is conceded to the supporters of the first view, that the leading position they are accustomed to maintain, —viz., that the facts or phenomena of the case, the universal moral depravity and actual personal guilt or sinfulness of men, being once conclusively established by satisfactory evidence, they are not bound, as a preliminary to, or an accompaniment of, receiving the facts or phenomena as proved, and calling upon others to receive them, to give any account or explanation of the origin or cause of this state of things, —that this position is altogether impregnable, and cannot be successfully assailed. They are entitled to resolve it into the divine sovereignty, without attempting to explain it, and to contend that since this state of things does exist, it must be consistent with the character and moral government of God, though we may not be able to unfold this consistency. The supporters of the doctrine of imputation take advantage of this principle, as well as those who differ with them on this point. No man pretends to be able to comprehend or explain the doctrine of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon the present character and condition of men. All admit that it involves mysteries which human reason, enlightened by divine revelation, cannot fathom; and that, after all our study of Scripture, and all our investigation of the subject, we must resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty, and be content to say, "Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." All that is contended for by the advocates of the doctrine of imputation is, in general, that Scripture suggests and sanctions certain ideas upon the subject, which commend themselves to our minds as tending somewhat to explain and illustrate this mystery; to interpose one or two steps between the naked facts of the case, and the unfathomable abyss of God's sovereignty; and thereby to bring this subject somewhat into the line of the analogy of things which we can in some measure understand and estimate.

The supporters of the first view are right, so far as they go, in saying that Scripture makes known to us that the first sin of Adam was, in some way or other, connected with the moral character and condition of his posterity, —that the one was in some way the cause or occasion of the

other. But they are wrong in holding that Scripture teaches nothing more upon the subject than this, and, more particularly, in holding that it gives no sanction to the doctrine of imputation, as commonly held by Calvinistic divines. We cannot admit that this vague and indefinite statement of theirs, though undoubtedly true so far as it goes, fills up or exhausts the full import of the apostle's declarations, —that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, —that by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, — that by one man's disobedience many were made, or constituted sinners and of other information given us in Scripture upon this point. But we are not called upon to dwell upon this topic; and we proceed to observe that the views which we regard as suggested and sanctioned by Scripture, —i.e., the ideas which go to constitute and to explain the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, —do tend somewhat to illustrate this mysterious subject, and, at least, do not introduce into it any additional difficulty.

In order to the first sin of Adam exerting any real influence upon the moral character and condition of his posterity, he and they must have been in some sense or respect one; i.e., some species of unity or identity must have subsisted between them, as the ground, or basis, or rationale of the influence exerted, of the effect produced. This is admitted by all; and the question, indeed, may be said to turn mainly upon the nature and foundation of this oneness or identity. Some have supposed that there was a sort of physical oneness or identity between Adam and his descendants, whereby they existed in him as the plant in the seed, or the branches in the root, and thus, existing in him in a sort of literal physical sense, sinned in him and fell with him, —his sin and fall being thus theirs, and of course justly imputed to them, and involving them in its penal results. Augustine seems to have held the idea of a literal personal oneness; and not a few Calvinistic writers have used language that seemed to imply some notion of this sort. Jonathan Edwards certainly gave some countenance to this notion, though he seems to have combined, if not identified, it with the next mentioned species of identity, —that based upon Adam being the progenitor of the human race, and producing beings like himself. This idea has no sanction from Scripture, and is indeed quite unintelligible as a supposed description of an actual

reality. Adam was undoubtedly the actual progenitor of the whole human race, and this certainly constitutes, in a certain sense, a oneness or identity between them. It seems to be a law of nature, that where there is a process of generation, a being should produce one like himself, —of the same nature and general qualities with himself. This natural oneness or identity, viewed in connection with this law, has been applied to explain the bearing of Adam's sin upon his posterity. And the explanation just amounts to this, —that Adam having, by his first sin, become, in the way of natural consequence, or penal infliction, or both, wholly depraved in his own moral nature, transmitted, in accordance with the law above described, the same moral nature, — i.e., one wholly depraved, —to all his descendants. This view is generally adopted by those who deny the doctrine of imputation; but they scarcely venture to put it forth as throwing any real light upon the difficulty, or even changing its position; for, as the laws of nature are just the arrangements or appointments of God, — the modes or channels through which He effects His own purposes, —to put forth this as the explanation of the bearing of Adam's first sin upon the moral character and condition of his posterity, is merely to say, that God established a constitution or system of things, by which it was provided that the moral character which Adam might come to possess should descend to all his posterity; and that as he came, by his first sin, to have a depraved nature, this accordingly descended to all of them. Now, this is really nothing more than stating the matter of fact, as a matter of fact, and then tracing the result directly and immediately to a constitution or appointment of God. In short, it just leaves the matter where it found it, —it interposes nothing whatever between the result and the divine sovereignty, and does nothing whatever towards explaining or vindicating that divine constitution or arrangement under which the result has taken place. At the same time, it is to be remembered that the fact that Adam was the natural progenitor of the whole human race is universally

admitted; that it is in no way inconsistent with the doctrine of imputation; and that if any advantage is derivable from the application of the law, that " like begets like," it is possessed as fully by those who believe as by those who deny this doctrine, while those who deny it have no other principle to adduce in explanation.

The peculiarity of the doctrine of imputation, as generally held by Calvinistic divines, is, that it brings in another species of oneness or identity as subsisting between Adam and his posterity, viz., that of federal representation or covenant headship, —i.e., the doctrine that God made a covenant with Adam, and that in this covenant he represented his posterity, the covenant being made not only for himself, but for them, including in its provisions them as well as himself; so that, while there was no actual participation by them in the moral culpability or blameworthiness of his sin, they became, in consequence of his failure to fulfil the covenant engagement, in, or incurred reatus, or guilt in the sense of legal answerableness, to this effect, that God, on the ground of the covenant, regarded and treated them as if they had themselves been guilty of the sin whereby the covenant was broken; and that in this way they became involved in all the natural and penal consequences which Adam brought upon himself by his first sin. Now, this principle, viewing it merely as a hypothesis, and independently of the actual support it receives from Scripture, not only does not introduce any additional difficulty into the question, but does tend to throw some light upon this mysterious transaction, by bringing it somewhat under the analogy of transactions which we can comprehend and estimate, though it is not disputed that it still leaves difficulties unsolved which we cannot fully fathom. If this were seen in its true light, and if thereby the special prejudice with which many regard this doctrine of the imputation of the guilt or reatus of Adam's first sin to his posterity were removed, it might be expected that all who admit the total depravity of human nature as an actual feature of men's natural condition, of which they can give no account or explanation whatever, would be more likely to yield to the weight of the positive evidence which Scripture furnishes in proof of the doctrine that all mankind sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression.

### **III. The Want of Original Righteousness**

The second ingredient or constituent element of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, and in which all men now are by nature, is the want of original righteousness; and the explanation of this, too, is connected with some controversial discussions which prevailed at the

time of the Reformation, and with some topics which have been since controverted between Romanists and Protestants. The statement in the Catechism, in which the want of original righteousness is represented as one of the features or elements of the estate of sinfulness into which man fell, contains, by plain implication, an assertion of these positions, —that man, before his fall, had righteousness, or justice (*justitia*, as it was commonly called), entire rectitude as an actual quality of his moral nature or constitution; that no man now, since the fall, has naturally this original righteousness; and that it is a sin in men, one of the real features of the sinfulness of the estate into which they fell, that they have it not. This original righteousness which man had before the fall, is usually taken as designating not merely innocence or freedom from everything actually sinful, and from all bias or tendency towards it, but something higher and nobler than this, —viz., the positive, entire conformity of his whole moral nature and constitution— not merely of his actions, but of the innermost sources of these actions, in his desires and motives, in all the tendencies and inclinations of his mind and heart— to all the requirements of the law, which is holy, and just, and good. Original righteousness, thus understood, Protestants have usually regarded as comprehended in the image of God, in which man was created; and they have generally considered the fact that he was created in God's image, as affording evidence that he was created with original righteousness.

We have not, indeed, in Scripture any very direct information as to what the image of God in which man was created consisted in; and hence some variety of opinion has been entertained upon this point. Some have held that the image of God consisted in the mental powers and capacities which constituted man a rational and responsible being; the Socinians, who usually contrive to find in the lowest deep a lower deep, view it as consisting only in dominion over the other creatures; while most men have been of opinion that it must have included, whatever else it might imply, entire conformity of moral nature and constitution, according to his capacity, to God's character and laws. We can scarcely, indeed, conceive it possible that God would have directly and immediately created any other kind of rational and responsible being than one morally pure and perfect, according to his capacity or standing in creation; and we would have required very strong evidence to lead us to entertain any

doubt of this, even though we had not been told that God created man after His own image. And we are plainly told in Scripture that the image of God, into which man is to be renewed, —according to which he is to be made over again, as the result in God's chosen people of the mediation of Christ, and the operation of His Spirit, —consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; from which the inference is fully warranted, that in these qualities consisted, principally at least, the image of God in which he was created.

Romanists do not dispute that Adam, before the fall, had original righteousness as an actual quality of his moral character, or that, by his sin, he lost it, not only for himself, but for his posterity, —and that all men now come into the world without it; and, indeed, a large proportion of the most eminent Romish divines maintain that this want of original righteousness— *carentia* or *privatio originalis justitioe*— is the principal, if not the sole, ingredient of the sinfulness of men's natural condition; and that the decree of the Council of Trent leaves them at full liberty to assert this. It is Socinians only who deny that man ever had an original righteousness. As their fundamental principle upon this whole subject is, that men have now the very same moral nature or constitution as Adam had when he was created; and as they do not ascribe to men as they now come into the world what is usually understood by original righteousness as a positive quality, but merely innocence of nature, or freedom from all moral depravity, combined with full power to do whatever God requires of them, they of course deny that Adam ever possessed it. But while the Church of Rome admits that Adam, before his fall, had original righteousness as a positive quality of his moral character, she maintains that this original righteousness was not natural to him, but supernatural, —i.e., that it was not comprehended in, or did not result from, the principles of his moral nature, as originally constituted, but was a supernatural gift or grace, specially or extraordinarily conferred upon him by God; and, in order to bring out more emphatically the distinction between the *pura naturalia*, as they call them, in Adam, and this supernatural gift of original righteousness, many Popish writers have contended that this supernatural gift was not conferred upon him along with the *pura naturalia* at the time of his creation, but at a subsequent period. And it is certain that the Council of Trent intentionally and

deliberately framed its decree upon the subject in such terms as not to preclude the posteriority in point of time of the bestowal of the supernaturalia upon Adam, for the original draft of the decree set forth that Adam by his sin lost the holiness and justice in which he was created, —*sanitatem et justitiam in qua creatus fuerat*, —and when it was represented to them that this would be a condemnation of those divines who had maintained that Adam did not possess this *justitia* or righteousness at his creation, but received it afterwards, they, in order to avoid this, changed the expression into *in qua constitutus fuerat*, as it now stands in the decree. Although the Reformers generally, and especially Luther, had strenuously contended that this original righteousness was a quality of man's proper nature, and necessary to its perfection and completeness, and not a supernatural gift, specially and, as it were, adventitiously and in mere sovereignty conferred by God, yet nothing was formally decided upon this point by the Council of Trent. The opposite view, however, was universally held by Popish theologians; and it was at length made a binding article of faith by the bulls of Pius V. and Gregory XIII. against Baius in 1567 and 1579, confirmed by a bull of Urban VIII. in 1641. In these bulls, which, though opposed by some at the time of their promulgation, have been accepted by the church, and are therefore binding upon all Romanists, the following doctrines taught by Baius were condemned as heretical, and, of course, the opposite doctrines were asserted and established: — "*Humanae nature sublimatio, et exaltatio in consortium divinae debita fuit integritati primae conditionis, ac proinde naturalis dicenda est, non supernaturalis. Integritas primae conditionis non fuit indebita naturae humanae exaltatio, sed ejus naturalis conditio.*" And, in the bull *Unigenitus*, the following doctrine of Quesnel was condemned: — "*Gratia Adami est sequela creationis et erat debita naturae sanae et integrae.*"

This question, accordingly, has always been regarded as one of the points controverted between Protestants and Papists. It may seem at first view a mere logomachy, and to involve considerations which are of no practical importance, or points which we have no materials for deciding. This, however, is a mistake, as might be shown at once from an examination of the nature of the case, and from the history of the discussions which have taken place regarding it. It is quite true that there are senses the words

might bear in which the Protestants would admit that this original righteousness was not natural, but supernatural, and in which Papists would admit that it was not supernatural, but natural, as you will see explained in Turretine yet it is also true, as you will likewise see there, that there is a pretty well defined status quaestionis upon the subject. The question may, without entering into minute details, be said to be this: Whether this original righteousness, which Adam admittedly possessed, formed an integral necessary constituent of man's original moral constitution, so that his general position and capacities as a moral being would have been materially different from what they were if he had wanted it, and would not have possessed that completeness and perfection which are due and necessary to the place which God, in His general idea or archetype of man, intended him to occupy, —the purpose which He created man to serve; and we think there are sufficient indications in Scripture to warrant us in deciding this question against the Church of Rome in the affirmative. ,The chief object of the Romanists in maintaining that this righteousness was not an original inherent quality of man's proper nature, due to it (debita), because necessary to its completeness or perfection, is, that they may thus lay a foundation for ascribing even to fallen man a natural power to do God's will, and that they may with greater plausibility deny that concupiscence in the regenerate is sin. The bearing of this notion upon their denial of the sinfulness of concupiscence, —the only doctrine taught by the Council of Trent, in their decree upon original sin, which Protestants in general condemn as positively erroneous, —we will afterwards have occasion to advert to; and the mode in which they apply the notion to show that man has still, though fallen, full power to do the will of God, is this: As Adam's original righteousness, or the perfect conformity of his entire moral constitution to God's law, did not form a constituent part of his proper nature as a creature of a certain class or description, but was a superadded supernatural gift, he might lose it, or it might be taken from him, while yet he retained all his proper natural powers, including a power to do the will of God, though now without righteousness, as a positive quality of his moral character. And this, indeed, is the view which they commonly give of the nature and effects of the fall. They commonly assert that Adam, by his sin, lost all that was supernaturally bestowed upon him, but retained everything that formed an original part of his own

proper moral constitution; though this likewise, they generally admit, was somewhat injured or damaged by his transgression; and this, too, they contend, is still the actual condition of fallen man. He is stained, indeed, they admit, with the guilt of Adam's sin, and he wants original righteousness, which Adam forfeited for himself and for his posterity; but there is no positive corruption or depravity attaching to his moral nature; and having the natural moral powers with which Adam was originally endowed, though without his superadded supernatural graces, he can still do something towards fulfilling the divine law, and preparing himself for again becoming the recipient of supernatural divine grace through Christ. Bellarmine, accordingly, represents the doctrine of Romanists upon this subject as striking at once against the two opposite extremes of the doctrines of the Pelagians and the Reformers; for that by means of it they are enabled to hold against the Pelagians, that "*per Adae peccatum totum hominem vere deteriorem esse factum,*" i.e., by the removal of the supernaturalialia without needing to deny the Pelagian position, that man retains, though fallen, all his natural powers and capacities; and at the same time to maintain against the Reformers, "*nec liberum arbitrium, neque alia naturalia dona, sed soltim supernaturalialia perdidisse,*" without needing to deny that he has lost original righteousness.

The application which Romanists thus make of their doctrine, that original righteousness was not a natural but a supernatural quality of man's original moral constitution, —an application which in itself is quite legitimate, and cannot be evaded, if the premises are granted, —to defend two anti-scriptural errors, —viz., first, that fallen man retains full power to do the whole will of God; and, secondly, that concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, —at once affords materials for establishing the falsehood of their doctrine, and illustrating the importance of the opposite truth as it was held by the Reformers. And it is a curious and interesting fact, and decidedly confirms these conclusions as to the falsehood of the Popish doctrine upon this point, and the practical importance of the opposite Protestant truth, that the most eminent theologians, and the best men who have at different periods risen up in the Church of Rome, and have taught so large a measure of scriptural and evangelical truth as to incur the public censure of the ecclesiastical authorities, —viz., Baius, Jansenius, and Quesnel, — have all, more or less

explicitly, declared in favour of the Protestant doctrine upon this subject.

There have been some Protestant writers who, though not deviating very far from the paths of sound doctrine on the subject of original sin in general, have adopted or approximated to the Popish views upon this point, though conveying their sentiments in different phraseology, and applying them to a different purpose. A good illustration of this is furnished by one of the most recent works of importance published in this country on the subject of original sin— the Congregational Lecture for 1845, by the late Dr Payne of Exeter. His work on the doctrine of original sin is one of very considerable ability and value, and contains some important and useful discussion, though presenting views upon some points which appear to me erroneous and dangerous. Dr Payne may be said to belong to the third of the classes under which I ranked the writers who have discussed the subject of imputation in connection with the universal prevalence of moral depravity, —consisting of those who have held to a large extent the substance of what has been generally taught by Calvinistic divines upon this subject, while at the same time they exhibited a great desire to modify or soften some of the orthodox positions, and a very unnecessary and excessive fastidiousness about the employment of the ordinary orthodox phraseology. This is, I think, the general character of Dr Payne's work on original sin, though the point to which I am now to refer, along with one or two other views which he propounds, may be regarded as a somewhat more important error than would be fairly comprehended under the above description.

His leading peculiar position is, that the gifts which were conferred by God upon Adam, and deposited with him as the federal head of his posterity, including especially the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, were chartered benefits, and chartered benefits exclusively, —i.e., benefits which God bestowed upon him gratuitously in mere sovereignty, to which Adam had no claim in fairness or equity, because they were not necessary to the integrity or completeness of his constitution, viewed simply as the creature man; the enjoyment of which by him, or his posterity, God might consequently suspend upon any condition He thought proper, and which He might at once take away from them for any reason that would warrant their being taken from him, just as, to use an illustration he frequently

employs, a nobleman guilty of treason forfeits, by the law of our country, his titles and estates, not only for himself but his descendants. This principle he fully develops, and labours to apply, both to the implication generally of mankind in the consequences of Adam's sin, and to the introduction and prevalence of depravity of moral nature; and in this way he is led to modify some of the views which have been generally held by orthodox divines, and to censure and repudiate some of the phraseology they have been accustomed to employ; though he has not succeeded, so far as I can perceive, by any of his proposed modifications, in introducing any real or decided improvement.

For instance, upon the ground of this principle about chartered benefits, he contends that the covenant made with Adam, in which he occupied the position of federal representative of his posterity, was not a covenant of works, as Calvinistic divines have been accustomed to represent it, but a covenant of grace. That there is a sense in which it might be called a covenant of grace, no one would dispute, for it was a gracious arrangement, manifesting the goodness and benevolence of God. There is a sense in which all God's dealings with His creatures may be classed under the two heads of gracious and penal, for no creature can in strict justice merit anything at God's hands; but under the general head of gracious, in this classification, we can and we may distinguish between those acts which are purely gratuitous, —which have no cause, or ground, or motive whatever, except the mere benevolent good pleasure of God, — and those which, though still gracious as manifesting the benevolence of God, and not due on the ground of justice irrespective of promise or compact, have yet some ground or foundation in equity, or in the fitnesses and congruities of things. We think it can be shown that God's dealings with Adam, after He had decreed to create him, —i.e., His dealings with him in regulating his moral constitution and qualities, and in arranging as to the results of the trial to which he was subjected, upon himself and his posterity, —were gracious only in the latter of these two senses; and that, therefore, the covenant made with him may without impropriety be denied to be a covenant of grace, as it certainly was not a covenant of grace in the same sense with the new and better covenant; while, from the general nature of its fundamental provision, it may without impropriety be called a covenant of works.

But we cannot dwell upon this, for we have introduced the subject of Dr Payne's work solely for the purpose of pointing out how strikingly manifest it is, from the explanations formerly given, that this doctrine of his about chartered benefits is identical in substance with the Popish doctrine, that original righteousness is not an integral constituent quality of man's original moral constitution, and necessary to its completeness or perfection, but a superadded supernatural gift. And the resemblance might be shown to hold not only in substance, but in some curious points of detail. We have seen, for instance, that many Romish writers have held, that the supernatural gift of original righteousness was not conferred on Adam at his creation, and that the Council of Trent intentionally framed its decree in such a way as to leave this an open question; while Dr Payne, in like manner, contends that those chartered benefits, which alone Adam by his sin forfeited for himself and his posterity, were only conferred upon him when, at a period subsequent to his creation, he was invested with the character of federal head of the human race. The fact that this doctrine about chartered benefits is in substance identical with a doctrine which has been always zealously maintained by the; Church of Rome, in opposition to the great body of the Protestants, and to the soundest theologians and the best men who have sprung up from time to time in her own communion, forms a legitimate presumption against it; and Dr Payne has not, we think, produced anything sufficient to overcome the force of the presumptions and the proofs by which, as taught by the Church of Rome, it has been opposed by Protestant divines. The old Popish writers applied, as we have seen, their doctrine upon this point, chiefly to the purpose of showing that man, even in his fallen state, had full power to do the whole will of God; while Dr Payne applies his principle, in substance the same, chiefly to indicate the justice and reasonableness of the constitution, in virtue of which men are treated as if they had committed Adam's first sin, and are involved in the consequences of his transgression. As the Reformers and their Popish opponents equally admitted the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, there was no call then formally to defend that doctrine against the objections of those who denied it altogether; but there are two facts connected with this matter, which may be fairly regarded as confirming the substantial identity of the Popish doctrine of supernatural righteousness, and Dr Payne's doctrine of chartered benefits, —viz., first,

that more modern Popish writers, who had to defend the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin against heretical Protestants who denied it, have applied their doctrine of supernatural righteousness for this purpose, very much in the same way in which Dr Payne has applied his doctrine of chartered benefits, as may be seen, for instance, in the "Prselectiones Theologicae" of Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome; and, secondly, that Dr Payne's work contains some indications, —though this topic is not fully and formally discussed, —that he would claim for fallen men, under the head of what is necessary in order to their being responsible, and would ascribe to them, in fact, a larger and fuller measure of power or ability to do what God requires of them, and thereby to escape from misery, than would be consistent with the views which Calvinists in general have entertained upon this subject. This is a notion pretty plainly shadowed forth in one of the features of his favourite illustration, —the case of a nobleman convicted of treason, —viz., that the actual traitor alone forfeits his life, and that his descendants, while they lose the titles and estates which, but for his act of treason, would have come to them, retain all the ordinary natural rights of citizens, and have no bar put in their way to prevent them from rising again, or de novo, without any remission of the sentence, or any special interposition from any quarter on their behalf to the same position which their ancestor had occupied. Dr Payne, indeed, does not bring out any such view as this in regard to the natural condition of man, —a view which would contradict not only the doctrine of Calvinists, but the express declarations of the Council of Trent. Some of his positions, however, seem to favour it; and we are not quite sure that he was so decidedly opposed to it, as some of his general doctrines would seem to imply.

With respect to Dr Payne's application of the notion, that all that Adam in his federal or representative capacity forfeited, and forfeited for his posterity as well as himself, was only chartered benefits, to the purpose of vindicating the justice and reasonableness of the constitution whereby all men were involved in the consequences of Adam's first sin, we have only to observe that, independently altogether of the question as to the truth of this notion, its irrelevancy and insufficiency for this purpose are plainly implied in some positions we have already laid down, —as to the

difference, in relation to this difficulty, between the doctrine which restricts the consequences of Adam's sin, in its bearing on his posterity, to temporal evils and unfavourable moral circumstances, with perhaps some slight deterioration of moral constitution, and that which extends these consequences to an entire depravity of moral nature, issuing, certainly and invariably, in actual transgressions; and the impossibility, in this latter case, of deriving any real assistance, in dealing with the difficulty, from God's mere right as Creator to bestow upon His creatures, according to His good pleasure, different degrees of happiness and of privilege. If Adam, as our federal head, lost for himself and us, by his sin, only chartered benefits, —gratuitously bestowed after his creation, and forming no integral part of his proper constitution as the creature man, necessary to its completeness and perfection, —then it is plain that the only aspect in which God can be contemplated as acting in the matter, is that simply of a Creator bestowing upon His creatures different degrees of happiness and privilege; and this, as we formerly showed, is a view of His position and actings in the matter, which is utterly inadequate to throw any light upon the difficulty, unless it be assumed that men, after and notwithstanding the loss of these chartered benefits, retained all the ordinary rights and privileges of citizenship, i.e., retained the power of escaping by their own strength, or by some universal grace furnished to them all, from at least permanent misery, —in other words, unless it be denied that men are now, in point of fact, in that condition of moral depravity and actual sinfulness, which Scripture, consciousness, and observation, all concur in proving to attach to them.

Here, we may remark by the way, there is brought out a confirmation of our previous position, —viz., that Dr Payne's doctrine of chartered benefits only being lost in Adam, tends to involve him (though he makes no such application of it) in the application which the Papists make of their doctrine, that original righteousness is supernatural, —viz., that men, though fallen, have still full power to do what God requires of them. There is no view of God's actings in this whole matter which at all accords with the actual, proved realities of the case, except that which represents Him in the light of a just Judge punishing sin, —a view which implies that men's want of original righteousness and the corruption of their whole nature have a penal character, are punishments righteously inflicted on

account of sin, not indeed by the positive communication of depravity, but through the just withdrawal of divine grace, and of the influences of the Holy Spirit. And the only explanation which Scripture affords of this mysterious constitution of things is, that men have the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them or charged against them, so as to be legally exposed to the penalties which he incurred; and that this imputation to them of the guilt or reatus of his first sin is based upon his being their federal head or legal representative in the covenant which God made with him. All this, we think, is clearly enough indicated in Scripture; but beyond this Scripture does not go; — and here, therefore, our reasonings and speculations should terminate, or if they are carried at all beyond this point, they should still be strictly confined to the one single object of answering, so far as may be necessary, the objections of opponents; and lest, even in answering objections, we should be tempted to indulge in unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, we should take care not to extend our reasonings beyond the limits which the logical necessities of the case require us to traverse; i.e., we should restrict them to the one single object of proving— for this is all that, in the circumstances, is logically incumbent upon us— that it cannot be proved that this constitution of things necessarily involves any injustice.

Among the general suggestions that have been thrown out for the purpose of answering objections within the limits now specified, there is one which we have been always disposed to regard as reasonable and plausible, —as an idea which might be legitimately entertained, because, at least, not opposed to the statements of Scripture or the analogy of faith, and as fitted— though certainly not furnishing a solution of the great difficulty— to afford some relief and satisfaction to the mind in contemplating this mysterious subject. It is this: that God, in His wisdom and sovereignty, — following out, as it were, the fall of the angels who kept not their first estate, —resolved to create a rational and responsible being of a different class or description, differently constituted and differently circumstanced from the angels, and to subject this being to moral probation, having resolved to make the trial or probation of the first being of this particular class or description, as a specimen of the whole, the trial or probation of all this class of creatures descending from him; so that the result of the trial in his case should be applied to, and

should determine the condition and destiny of, the race, just as if each individual of this class of beings had been actually subjected to trial or probation in his own person, with the same result as was exhibited in the first specimen of it. We think it might be shown that the application of this general idea, taken merely as a hypothesis, would furnish some materials that are fitted to stop the mouths of objectors, and to show that, while the burden of proving that this constitution necessarily involves injustice lies on them, they are not able to accomplish this. But we will not enlarge in the way of attempting to make this application of the idea, lest we should seem to be attaching to it an undue value and importance, or appear to be in any measure suspending the truth of the doctrines we have been inculcating upon its soundness and validity; and we hasten to observe, that the only reason why we have mentioned it, is because we think that there is a beautiful harmony between it and the Protestant doctrine, that man's original righteousness was natural and not supernatural; that what Adam lost for himself and his posterity was not chartered benefits merely, but integral constituent elements of his moral constitution; and that these two views afford mutual corroboration.

We can scarcely conceive, in any case, of God directly and immediately creating a moral and responsible being, who did not possess inherently, as a proper integral part of his moral constitution, entire rectitude or conformity to God's law; and the difficulty of conceiving of this is increased, when the being supposed is regarded as a specimen or representative of a class of beings who are to be the subjects of a great moral experiment, while yet the experiment is to be completed or decided in the case of this one specimen as representing them all. We feel, upon such an assumption, as if there was something like a claim in equity, that this, being— mutable indeed, and left to the freedom of his own will, else there could not be a full and perfect moral probation of him— should possess righteousness and holiness as qualities of his moral constitution; or, to use language formerly quoted, as employed by Baius, and condemned by the Church of Rome, that this was " *debita integritati primae conditionis;*" and also, that he should have every advantage, in point of circumstances as well as constitution, for doing all that God required of him, —for succeeding in the probation to which he was to be subjected. It is true, indeed, that God might have superadded to his

proper natural constitution supernatural gifts or graces, which would have placed Adam in equally favourable circumstances for succeeding in the trial, as those which, in point of fact, he enjoyed by nature; but then he would not, in that case, have been a being inherently of the same class or description with his posterity, and of course his trial, whatever might have been the result of it, would not have fully illustrated the same principles and accomplished the same purposes.

#### **IV. Corruption of Nature**

We can now only advert very briefly to the next great feature, or constituent element, of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, — viz., the corruption of his whole nature, or that which is ordinarily, and most properly, called original sin. The Romanists generally contend that the sin which Adam entailed upon his posterity consisted chiefly, if not exclusively, in the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them, and in the want of original righteousness, and say little or nothing about the corruption of his whole nature, or his moral depravity. They are not bound to deny this doctrine, for the Council of Trent has not condemned it; but neither are they bound to assert it, because the Council has abstained intentionally, as we formerly showed, from defining what are the ingredients or constituent elements of the peccatum which it declares that Adam transmitted to the whole human race. The Jansenists, accordingly, held themselves at liberty to maintain, with Augustine, an entire and positive corruption or depravity, — i.e., actual bias or tendency to sin as attaching to man's moral nature; while Romanists more generally have denied this, or admitted it only in a very vague and indefinite sense, — very much like the less evangelical Arminians, — and have regarded original sin as being a mere negation or privation, — the want of that original righteousness, which was merely a supernatural gift bestowed upon Adam, and forfeited not only for himself, but for his posterity, by his first sin. All the Reformers maintained, and most Protestant churches have ever since professed, that it is an actual feature in the character of fallen man, that he has a powerful predominating bias, tendency, or inclination to sin, — to depart from God, and to violate His laws. This is in many respects the most important feature or element of the estate of sin into which man 'fell, especially as it is the proximate

cause or source of all his actual transgressions of the divine commandments. He not only does not bring with him into the world anything in his moral nature that involves or produces fear or love of God, —a desire to honour or serve Him; but he is, in virtue of the actual constitution of his moral nature, as it exists, wholly indisposed and averse to everything that is really accordant with God's will, and with the requirements of the law which He has imposed, and could not but impose, upon His intelligent and moral creatures. This is the view given us in the sacred Scriptures of the actual moral condition of human nature, and it is abundantly confirmed by experience. Though brought out fully by the Reformers, in opposition to the Pelagian views which generally prevailed at that time in the Church of Rome, it was neither affirmed nor denied by the Council of Trent, —i.e., directly, for it was denied (as we shall afterwards see) by implication; and in the Church of Rome, as in every other church, this doctrine has ever proved a test of men's character, —those who were best acquainted with the word of God and their own hearts, and who had the deepest impressions of divine things, receiving and approving of it; and those who were deficient in these respects, and just in proportion to their deficiency, inclined to deny it altogether, or to explain it away, and practically to reduce the great and fearful reality which it asserts to insignificance or nonentity.

I am not called upon to attempt to establish the truth of this great doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature, certainly and invariably producing actual transgressions of God's law; and I have had occasion, under the former heads, to advert fully to the relation which, in the history of the discussions of this subject, this entire corruption of nature has held, and should hold, to the other features or elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell. On these grounds I do not mean to enter further into the consideration of it, but would only express my sense of the paramount importance of becoming familiar with the evidence from Scripture, consciousness, experience, and observation, on which this great doctrine rests, —of forming clear and accurate conceptions of all that the doctrine involves or implies, — and of fully and habitually realizing it; since this is not only the most important truth, both theoretically and practically, in a full view of what man's natural condition is, —and therefore indispensable to an acquaintance with the

nature and application of the remedy that has been provided, —but since, more particularly, a full establishment in the assured belief of this corruption of man's whole nature, and the universality of actual transgression resulting from it as a great reality, is most directly and powerfully fitted to preserve from error, and to guide into all truth with respect to the other elements of the sinfulness of men's natural condition, and to lead certainly and immediately to the adoption of those practical steps on which the salvation of men individually is suspended.

This subject strikingly illustrates the necessity and importance of forming and fixing in our minds precise and definite conceptions upon theological subjects, so far as the word of God affords us materials for doing so. The main part of the decree of the Council of Trent upon the subject of original sin is sound and scriptural, so far as it goes; but being, for reasons which we have explained, very vague and general in its statements, it did nothing to advance the cause of sound doctrine. It is not, indeed, directly and in itself chargeable with Pelagianism; but as it found a Pelagian spirit and tendency generally prevalent in the Church of Rome, so it has left it there, and allowed it to operate with undiminished force, exerting a most injurious influence upon men's whole conceptions of the gospel method of salvation, and, of course, upon their spiritual welfare. And what a contrast does the decree of the Council of Trent present to the clear, precise, and definite statements of our Shorter Catechism, in regard to the nature and constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, —statements so well fitted to convey full and exact conceptions to the understanding, in regard to what man by nature really is, and thereby to impress the heart and to influence the conduct!

We have still to point out, in the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, what is not only defective as being vague and indefinite, but positively erroneous; and to show how it is, that, by erroneous doctrines upon other subjects, —especially on baptismal justification and baptismal regeneration, —she has neutralized or rendered of none effect, practically at least, even what is sound and scriptural in her professed doctrine upon original sin.

## V. Concupiscence

What is positively erroneous in the decree of the Council of Trent concerning original sin, is contained in the fifth and last section of their decree, and may be said to consist of two parts, —first, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, not only is the guilt of original sin remitted, but everything in men which comes truly and properly under the head of sin is taken away; and, secondly, that concupiscence in baptized and regenerate persons is not truly and properly sin.

The first of these positions, with certain explanations, is usually admitted by Protestants to be true, except in so far as it comprehends the second. We shall therefore advert to the second one first; and in returning to the other, and illustrating the explanations and qualifications with which alone its truth can be admitted, we will have an opportunity of explaining how the Church of Rome neutralizes or undoes all that is sound and good in its professed doctrine upon the general subject of original sin. By concupiscence, or evil desire in its technical sense, is meant substantially what is known more popularly under the name of indwelling sin. It designates what the apostle calls the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, or the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in renewed men; but with this important limitation, that as used in this particular controversy, it includes only the first risings or movements of the desires which tend or are directed towards what is evil, antecedently to their being deliberately consented to, and to the actual sin to which they tend or point being resolved upon or performed. It is often called the fuel (fomes) of sin, as being that from which, when it is cherished and not subdued, actual transgressions proceed. The Apostle James undoubtedly distinguishes this concupiscence or ἐπιθυμία, translated "lust" in our version, from the ἁμαρτία or sin which it produces when it has conceived; and this proves that there is something comprehended under the name of sin which concupiscence is not. But the statement does not necessarily imply more than this, and it determines nothing as to whether or not the ἐπιθυμία, though of course not the same with the (sin) ἁμαρτία which it produces, be itself sinful. The Council of Trent denied that concupiscence in this sense, as comprehending the first risings or movements of desires

tending to what is evil, but not deliberately consented to, is truly and properly sinful; and the opposite doctrine upon this subject generally maintained by Protestant churches, is thus expressed in our Confession (chap. vi., sec. 5). "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin,"— a statement which is just formally and in terminis, and was evidently intended to be, a contradiction to the decree of the Council of Trent, and indeed can be fully and exactly understood only when viewed in connection with that decree and the controversy to which it has given rise. It will be proper to quote the words of the decree upon this point: " *Manere autem in baptizatis concupiscentiam vel fomitem, haec sancta synodus fatetur et sentit. . . . Hanc concupiscentiam, quam aliquando Apostolus peccatum appellat, sancta synodus declarat ecclesiam catholicam nunquam intellexisse peccatum appellari, quod vere et proprie in renatis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est et ad peccatum inclinatur.*" And then it proceeds to anathematize any one who holds a different opinion. Father Paul tells us of an interesting circumstance connected with the discussions that took place in the council regarding this part of the decree. The proposed deliverance was assented to by all except a Carmelite friar of the name of Antoine Marinier, who objected to the council condemning as heretical, under an anathema, a position which unquestionably had, in terminis, the sanction of the Apostle Paul, and had also, as he alleged, the authority of Augustine. His opposition, however, received no support; but, on the contrary, it only recalled to the recollection of the council two very equivocal sermons which Marinier had preached before them, in which he had spoken in a very suspicious way about the duty of confiding only in God's mercies, and not trusting in our own good works; and confirmed the suspicions which these sermons had produced, that he was not far removed from the doctrine of the Protestants!

The doctrine of Romanists upon this subject is intimately connected with the views they hold regarding man's moral constitution before the fall. Man, they think, in his own proper nature, or in *puris naturalibus*, as the schoolmen expressed it, though free from all positive tendency to sin, was not exempted from a struggle or want of harmony between the higher and

the lower departments of his nature, —a struggle or discordance which was prevented from producing or leading to anything actually sinful only by the supernatural gift of original righteousness, —a gift which, though it did not preclude a struggle, or something like it, prevented any actual sinful result, until God was pleased to permit the fall. I do not say that it was their doctrine, in regard to the constitution of man's moral nature as unfallen, that led them to deny the sinfulness of concupiscence, or of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in the regenerate; for I believe that the reverse of this was the true history of the case, and that it was their doctrine of the non-sinfulness of concupiscence in the regenerate that led to the invention of their notion about man being created without original righteousness, except as a supernatural quality added to the *pura naturalia*. There is but little information given us in Scripture bearing upon anything that preceded the fall of man; and both Protestants and Romanists have been much in the habit, and not unreasonably, of deducing their respective opinions as to what man was before the fall, chiefly from the views they have derived, respectively, from Scripture as to what man is as fallen, and what he is as renewed. But though the Popish view of the innocence of concupiscence in the regenerate, led to their notion of man's natural want of original righteousness, and to the consequent innocent struggle between the higher and the lower powers of his nature, rather than the reverse; yet the two doctrines manifestly harmonize with, and illustrate, each other: for it is evident, on the one hand, that if in man before his fall, viewed as in *puris naturalibus*, there was a struggle, or even a want of perfect harmony, between the higher and lower departments of his nature, this would countenance the notion that concupiscence in the regenerate, the cause of the struggle which undoubtedly exists in them, might not be sinful; and that, on the other hand, if concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, this would countenance the notion that there might be such a struggle, or want of harmony, as is alleged, in man before the fall.

Two of the most striking and dangerous tendencies or general characteristics of the theology of the Church of Rome are, —first, exaggerating the efficacy and influence of external ordinances; and, secondly, providing for men meriting the favour of God and the rewards of heaven; and both these tendencies are exhibited in this single doctrine

of the innocence or non-sinfulness of concupiscence. It magnifies the efficacy of baptism, which has so entirely removed from men everything which really possesses the nature of sin; and it puts men upon a most favourable vantage ground for meriting increase of grace and eternal life. Viewed in these aspects, this question, thought it may appear at first sight a mere subtlety, becomes invested with no small practical importance. It will be observed that the Council of Trent, in their decree, distinctly admit that the apostle sometimes calls this concupiscence sin; and in their note upon the passage, they refer to the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, which contain those inspired declarations from which mainly Protestants have deduced the doctrine of the sinfulness of that tendency to sin which remains in the regenerate, and of the first motions of evil desire, though not deliberately consented to or followed out. On the ground of the apostle's statements in these chapters, in which he certainly speaks of concupiscence in the regenerate as sin, the Romanists admit that there is a certain sense in which it may be called sin; but they allege that the only sense in which it can be called sin, is an improper or metaphorical one, or, as the council states it, that the apostle calls it sin, not because it is truly and properly sin, but because it proceeds from sin and inclines to sin, —or, as the Romish divines usually express it, because it is both the punishment of sin and the cause of sin. Protestants, of course, concur with them in regarding it as the punishment of sin, because the Scriptures represent the whole corruption of man's moral nature as a penal infliction imposed upon them through the withdrawal of divine grace, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of being involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them; and in regarding it also as the cause of sin, as it is manifestly the immediate antecedent or proximate cause of the actual sins, in thought, word, and deed, which the regenerate commit, —i.e., of sin in the more limited sense in which the word is used by the Apostle James, when he says that lust, or evil desire, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin. But Protestants also believe that lust or concupiscence in the regenerate, as including a remaining tendency towards what is sinful, and the first or earliest motions of this tendency in the heart, though not deliberately consented to and followed out, is itself truly and properly sinful. And the main proof of this position, which the Council of Trent condemned and anathematized, is to be found in those portions of the Epistle to the

Romans in which the council admits that the apostle calls concupiscence and its first motions sin; and in which Protestants think they can show, in addition to the mere employment of the word ἁμαρτία, that both the particular statements made by the apostle, and the general course and tenor of his argument, prove that he uses it in its proper sense as implying ἀνόμια, —i.e., a want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God, and as involving guilt or reatus on the part of those to whom it attaches.

It would be out of place here to enter into a critical examination of the meaning or meanings of ἁμαρτία in these chapters, in order to establish this position. But one thing is very manifest, that it should require evidence of no ordinary strength and clearness to warrant men in maintaining that that is not truly and properly sin, which the apostle so frequently calls by that name, without giving any intimation that he understood it in an improper or metaphorical sense; and that if there be any subject with respect to which men ought to be more particularly scrupulous in departing, without full warrant, from the literal ordinary meaning of scriptural statements, it is when the deviation would represent that as innocent which God's word calls sinful, —a tendency which men's darkened understandings and sinful hearts are but too apt to encourage.

Now, the chief proofs which the Romanists commonly adduce in support of their doctrine upon this subject, and of the alleged improper or metaphorical use of the word sin by the apostle in treating of it, are some general statements of Scripture with regard to the effects of baptism and regeneration, and with regard to the general character and position in God's sight of the regenerate; and this brings us back again to the wider and more general position which is laid down in the fifth section of the decree on original sin, and in which the more limited and specific one we have now been considering is comprehended. It is this, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is taken away, and that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is removed. The Reformers complained that the Council of Trent did them injury in ascribing to them a direct and unqualified denial of this position, in the general terms in which it is put,

and declared that, with certain explanations, they admitted it to be true, except in so far as it involved or comprehended a denial of the true and proper sinfulness of that lust or concupiscence, that remaining corruption of moral nature, which still attached to the regenerate.

It is important to observe that Calvin and other Protestants, in discussing this position as laid down by the Council of Trent, do not usually enlarge upon the identification here made of baptism and regeneration, or raise any controversy about this, but just assume that baptism is regeneration, or rather that baptism may be here taken in the same sense as regeneration, as descriptive of that important era in a man's history, when God pardons his sins and admits him into the enjoyment of His favour. The Church of Rome holds that all this takes place invariably at and in baptism, believing in the doctrines both of baptismal justification and baptismal regeneration. Luther held some obscure notion of a similar kind, so far as regeneration is concerned; for he never thoroughly succeeded in throwing off the taint of Popish corruptions upon some points connected with the sacraments. The other Reformers certainly did not admit the Popish doctrines of baptismal justification and regeneration; but when the question as to the connection between baptism and regeneration was not under discussion at the time, they sometimes speak of baptism as if it were virtually identical with regeneration, just because the one is, in its general object and import, a sign or seal of the other, —because the baptism of an adult (and of course it is chiefly from adult baptism that we ought to form our general impressions as to what baptism is, and means), when the profession made in it is honest, or corresponds with the reality of the case, is a profession or declaration of his having been regenerated or born again, and having been admitted to the possession of all the benefits or privileges which are connected with regeneration. The Scriptures, in their more direct and formal statements about baptism, have respect chiefly, if not exclusively, to adult baptism, and assume the honesty or accuracy of the profession made in it; and the application of this consideration points out the futility of the arguments commonly adduced in support of baptismal regeneration, as usually taught by Papists and Prelatists. Upon the same ground, it is no uncommon thing for theologians, when they are not discussing the distinct and specific question of the connection that

subsists generally or universally between baptism and regeneration, to use these words as virtually describing one and the same thing.

This is the true explanation of the fact, which appears at first sight to be startling, that Calvin and other theologians, in discussing this position of the Council of Trent, do not usually raise any difficulty as to what is here said about baptism, but virtually regulate their admissions and denials regarding it, and the grounds on which they support them, just as if what is here said of baptism were said of regeneration, or the occasion when that grace of God is actually bestowed through which men's state and character are changed, and they escape from the consequence of being involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin. Calvin, accordingly, in discussing this part of the decree of the council in his *Antidote*, disclaiming the doctrine which it imputes to Protestants, and explaining how far they agreed and how far they differed with it, embodies his views in the following statement: —“*Nos totum peccati reatum vere tolli in Baptismo, asserimus: ita ut quae manent peccati reliquiae, non imputentur. Quo res clarius pateat, in memoriam revocent lectores, duplicem esse Baptismi gratiam: nam et peccatorum remissio illic, et regeneratio nobis offertur. Remissionem plenam fieri docemus: regenerationem inchoari duntaxat, suosque tota vita facere progressus. Proinde manet vere peccatum in nobis, neque per Baptismum statim uno die extinguitur: sed quia deletur reatus, imputatione nullum est.*”

It is held, then, by Protestants, that in baptism, —i.e., according to the explanation above given, at that great era when men receive the grace of God in truth, be it when it may, for that is not the question here, —their whole guilt, or reatus, or liability to punishment— the guilt of Adam's first sin, in which they were involved, and the guilt of all their own past sins— is taken away, and that the reigning power or corruption in their natures is subdued, so that sin, in the sense of depravity, has no longer dominion over them. But, on the other hand, they contend, in opposition to the Church of Rome, that even after men have been baptized, justified, and regenerated, the corruption or depravity of their nature is not wholly taken away; and there still attaches to them as long as they live much that is truly and properly sinful, much that might, viewed with reference to its own intrinsic demerits, justly expose them to God's displeasure, though it

is not now imputed to them for guilt and condemnation.

The grounds on which the Council of Trent, professing to interpret Scripture infallibly, maintains, in opposition to this, that in baptism or regeneration everything which is truly and properly sinful is removed or taken away, as they are embodied in the decree itself, are these, —that God hates nothing in the regenerate; that there is no condemnation to those who are truly buried with Christ by baptism unto death, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; that they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man, who is created after the image of God; and that they are called pure, holy, righteous, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. It is manifest, however, that none of these statements of Scripture about the general character and position of the regenerate, bear precisely and immediately upon the point in dispute; and that just from their generality they do not necessarily preclude the possibility of its being true, if other portions of Scripture seem to warrant the belief, that there is still something even about these men so described, which is in its own nature sinful, and might justly expose them to God's displeasure. That there is not now anything charged against them as involving guilt, reatus, or as de facto exposing them to condemnation and danger; that, as denominated from what now forms their guiding principle and determines their general character, they are no longer ungodly and depraved, but holy and righteous; that they are the objects of God's special love and complacency, and will assuredly be admitted by Him at last to the enjoyment of His own presence, —all this is certain, for it is clearly and explicitly taught in Scripture. But Scripture just as clearly and explicitly teaches, that even those persons, of whom all this is predicated, have still, so long as they remain upon earth, something sinful about them; that they are not only sinning in fact, by actual transgressions of God's law and by shortcomings in the discharge of duty, but also that the corruption or depravity of their nature has not been wholly taken away, but still manifests its presence and operation; and that, in estimating what there is about them that is truly sinful, we must take in this remaining corruption, and all its motions, as well as their actual transgressions of God's commandments. If this be indeed taught in Scripture, then we are bound to receive and admit it; and even if there were far greater difficulty than there is in reconciling it with other

statements made there with regard to the character and position of these men, this would afford no sufficient reason for our refusing to admit it as a portion of what God in His word teaches us concerning them, and of what therefore it is incumbent upon us to believe.

While, then, the Church of Rome holds the great scriptural principle, that Adam, by his fall, forfeited the favour of God, and holiness of nature not only for himself but for his posterity, and transmitted sin and death to the whole human race, she has not only erred by defect, in wrapping up this great truth in vague and general terms, and giving no clear and definite explanation of the nature and constituent elements of the sinfulness of the condition into which man fell; but she has also incurred the guilt of teaching one decided and important error, —in asserting that, in baptism or regeneration, everything that is properly sinful is removed or taken away; and that concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, though repeatedly called so by an inspired apostle. We would now only observe (for it is scarcely worth while to notice the declaration of the council, in the end of their decree about original sin, that it was not their intention to comprehend in it the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, the mother of God), that the Church of Rome has further provided, by other doctrines which she inculcates, for neutralizing practically all the scriptural truth which she teaches concerning the fall of man and its consequences. By teaching the invariable connection between the due administration of the ordinance of baptism, and the entire removal of guilt and depravity of nature, she has practically removed from men's minds, at least in countries where a profession of Christianity is established, —and where, in consequence, most persons are baptized in infancy, —all sense and impression of their true condition, responsibility, and danger as fallen creatures, who have become subject to the curse of a broken law. It is true, indeed, that men all come into the world involved in sin; but then, in professedly Christian countries, they are almost all baptized in infancy; and this, according to the Church of Rome, certainly frees them at once, and as a matter of course, from all guilt and depravity. No baptized person, according to the Popish doctrine, has any further process of regeneration to undergo, any renovation to be effected upon his moral nature. All that was necessary in this respect has been accomplished in his baptism, wherein, as the semi-Popish Catechism of

the Church of England hath it, "he was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Men may still, indeed, incur guilt by actual transgressions of God's law, but the Church of Rome has provided for their comfort the sacrament of penance, another external ordinance by which this guilt is taken away; and it is comforting also to be assured, that, in their endeavours to preserve what is called their baptismal purity from the stain of actual transgressions, they have no corruption or depravity of nature to struggle with. The practical effect of this teaching is to lead men to make no account whatever of their being involved in original sin, as including both guilt and depravity, so far as concerns any state of mind which they are at any time called upon to cherish, or any duty which they can be called upon to discharge; for what difference will it make practically upon the views, feelings, and impressions of the great mass of mankind, whether they are told that they have no original sin, or that, though they have, it was all certainly and conclusively washed away when they were baptized in their infancy? The practical effect upon the minds of Papists must be substantially the same as if they had been educated in Pelagian or Socinian principles, or in the entire disbelief of original sin; i.e., they will have the impression, even if they should be led to turn their thoughts to religious subjects when they come to years of understanding, and before they have been led into the commission of grosser sins, that they have just to start upon the work of effecting all that is now needful for their own salvation, by preserving a decent conformity to outward requirements, whether ordinances or moral duties, while they have no depravity of nature, which must first of all have its power broken, — still be continually struggled against. Scriptural views of the effects of the fall, and of the actual condition of man as fallen, firmly held and fully applied, are fitted to exert a most wholesome influence upon men's whole conceptions of the way of salvation, and their whole impressions of divine things, and, indeed, are indispensable as a means to this end; but the Church of Rome holds the truth upon this important subject, so far as she holds it, in unrighteousness, admitting it in words, but denying it in reality, — admitting it into her system only for the purpose of making men dependent for its removal upon the priest, by the administration of an outward rite, that they may thus be constrained into submission to his authority, but for any other practical purposes rejecting or denying it. It is

a striking illustration of the injurious and dangerous tendency of the notion that guilt and depravity are taken away in baptism, that in Romish theology, —and this is true, from the same cause, to a large extent, of the theology of the Church of England, —the important scriptural doctrine of regeneration, or of a real renovation of men's moral nature by the operation of the Holy Ghost, through the belief of the truth, is seldom if ever mentioned, but is quietly assumed to be wholly unnecessary; because men have been baptized in their infancy, and have thereby been certainly put in possession of everything that is necessary, except their own outward obedience to God's commandments, for their deliverance from all danger, and their admission into heaven.

## **VI. Sinfulness of Works before Regeneration**

I have had occasion to mention that, at the time of the Reformation, the disputes between the Reformers and the Romanists under the head of original sin, turned, not so much upon the proper nature or definition of the thing itself, or the exposition of its constituent elements, but rather upon its practical bearing on the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit, — topics with which it certainly has, upon any view, a very intimate connection. Luther and his immediate followers were chiefly concerned about bringing out fully the true doctrine of Scripture as to the way in which a sinner is saved from guilt, depravity, and ruin, and clearing this doctrine from the corruptions with which it had been obscured and perverted in the teaching that prevailed generally in the Church of Rome. The great obstacles they had to encounter in this work, were to be found in the notions that generally obtained with respect to human ability and human merit. The substance of what was then commonly believed upon these points, speaking generally, and not entering at present into anything like detail, was this: First, that men, notwithstanding their fallen condition, have still remaining some natural power by which they can prepare and dispose themselves for receiving divine grace, and even, in a certain sense, do something to merit that grace of God, by which alone their deliverance can be effected; and, secondly, that after the grace of God has been bestowed upon them, and has produced its primary and fundamental effects, they are then in a condition in which they have it in their power to merit from God, in a higher and stricter sense, increase of

grace and eternal life. These notions had been inculcated by many of the schoolmen, and prevailed generally, almost universally, in the Church of Rome at the period of the Reformation. It is certain that they were almost universally entertained by the instructors of the people at the time when Luther began his public labours as a Reformer; and it is manifest that they must have very materially influenced men's whole conceptions as to what man by nature is, as to what he can do for his own deliverance, and as to the way in which that deliverance is actually effected.

Now, the great work for which God raised up Luther, and which He qualified and enabled him to accomplish, was just to overturn these notions of human ability and human merit, with the foundation on which they rested, and the whole superstructure that was based upon them. These notions implied, or were deduced from, certain views as to the actual condition of human nature, as possessed by men when they come into the world; while the great practical result of them was to divide the accomplishment of men's salvation between the grace of God and the efforts and achievements of men themselves. It was chiefly in this way that the subject of original sin came to occupy a place in the controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; while these considerations, combined with the fact formerly adverted to, — viz., that the Church of Rome was so tied up by the authority of Augustine, and by the decisions of the early church in the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, that she could not, without belying all her principles, deviate very far from scriptural views upon original sin, at least in formal profession, — also explain the result already referred to, viz., that the discussions which then took place connected with original sin, turned mainly upon the bearing of the actual, existing moral condition of man as he comes into the world, upon free-will, grace, and merit. The Reformers, instead of labouring to prove that all Adam's posterity were involved in the guilt and penal consequences of his first transgression, and that he transmitted sin and death to all his descendants, — positions which, in some sense, and as expressed thus generally, the Romanists usually did not dispute, — were mainly concerned about certain practical conclusions which they thought deducible from them, and which, when once established, virtually overturned the whole foundations of the views that generally prevailed in

the Church of Rome, as to the way of a sinner's salvation. These practical conclusions were mainly two, —viz., first, that men, until they have become the subjects of God's special grace through Christ in regeneration, are altogether sinful, or have nothing whatever in them or about them but what is sinful; and, secondly, that even after they have become the subjects of God's justifying and renewing grace, there is still something sinful, and in itself deserving of punishment, about all that they are and all that they do, about every feature of their character, and every department of their conduct. These are strong and sweeping positions. It is evidently a matter of great importance to ascertain whether they are true or not;— for, if true, they are manifestly fitted to exert a most important influence, both theoretically and practically, —i.e., both in regulating men's conceptions of the way in which a sinner's salvation is and must be effected, and in regulating the personal feelings and impressions of those whose minds are at all concerned about their spiritual welfare. On this account it may be proper to devote some observations to the explanation and illustration of these most important positions, which were maintained by all the Reformers, and have been generally adopted by the Protestant churches. Luther, indeed, in explaining and defending them, made use occasionally of some rash and exaggerated expressions, which afforded a plausible handle for cavilling to Popish controversialists. But the positions, in substance, as we have stated them, were generally adopted by the Reformers, and had a place assigned to them in most of the Reformed Confessions. The Council of Trent condemned them both, well knowing that the maintenance of them proved an insuperable obstacle to any very material corruption of the gospel of the grace of God, and that, when intelligently and cordially received, they had a most powerful tendency to preserve men in a state of thought and feeling, in regard to the way of a sinner's salvation, very different from that which the Church of Rome inculcated and encouraged.

The first position is, that until men individually become the subjects of God's special grace, —i.e., until God's grace is actually communicated to them in their justification and regeneration, — there is nothing in them or about them but what is sinful, and deserving of God's displeasure. Now, this is virtually the same thing as saying that man's actual moral nature as

he comes into the world is wholly and not partially depraved; that he does not possess any tendency or inclination to what is truly good, but only to what is evil or sinful; that out of the mere exercise of his natural powers, the mere operation of the natural principles of his moral constitution, viewed apart from the special grace conferred upon him, nothing really good does or can come, nothing that either is in itself, or is fitted to produce, what is really in accordance with the requirements of God's law, —or, what is in substance the same thing, that all the actions of unregenerate men are wholly sinful. The Church of Rome admits that a man cannot be justified before God by his own works, done by the powers of nature, and without the grace of Christ, and that he cannot, without the preventing (*praeveniens*) inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, believe, hope, love, and repent as is necessary in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him; but then the Council of Trent, while maintaining these doctrines, denounced an anathema against those who held "that all works which are done before justification" (justification, it must be remembered, comprehends, in Romish theology, regeneration, and indeed the whole of what is usually classed by Protestant divines under the general head of the application of the blessings of redemption) "in whatever way they may be done, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure of God, and that the more anxiously any man strives to dispose prepare himself for grace, he only sins the more grievously."

This canon affords a good illustration of an observation formerly made in the general review of the proceedings of the council. The whole substance of the Protestant doctrine which the council intended to anathematize, is set forth in the first part of the canon; and the latter part of what is included in the same anathema, about a man only sinning the more grievously the more he strives to prepare himself for grace, is merely a somewhat strong and incautious statement of Luther's, —containing, indeed, what is true in substance, but forming no part of the main doctrine, and needing, perhaps, to be somewhat explained and modified. Luther, of course, in making this statement, was describing the case of a man who was laboriously going about to establish his own righteousness, who, having been somewhat impressed with the importance of salvation, was anxiously seeking to procure God's favour and the grace of

justification by deeds of law; and the substance of what he meant to teach upon this subject— though he may have sometimes expressed it strongly and incautiously— was this, that a man who was acting out so thoroughly erroneous views of the way of a sinner's salvation, was even, by the very success which might attend his efforts, only exposing his eternal welfare to the more imminent danger, inasmuch as any success he might have in this process had a powerful tendency to lead him to stop short of what was indispensable to his salvation, —a statement which is fully warranted both by Scripture and experience. But as the statement, when nakedly put without explanation, had a paradoxical and somewhat repulsive aspect, the council did not think it beneath them to introduce it into their anathema, in order to excite a prejudice against the main doctrine which they intended to condemn. This doctrine itself, —viz., that all works done before justification, or by unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve God's displeasure, —with the practical conclusion which is involved in it, —viz., that nothing done by men before they are justified and regenerated by God's grace, can possibly merit or deserve in any sense, however limited, the favour of God, or even exert any favourable influence in the way, either of calling forth any gracious exercise of God's power, or of preparing men for the reception of it, —was maintained by all the Reformers, and was established by them on satisfactory scriptural evidence. Calvin has a chapter to prove, and he does prove, that "*ex corrupta hominis natura nihil nisi damnabile prodire,*" — meaning by *damnabile*, what deserves condemnation, —and, of course, intending to teach, that so far from there being anything about men, resulting merely from their natural principles, and antecedently to their regeneration by the gracious power of God, which can merit justification, or even prepare them for the reception of it, there is, on the contrary, nothing about them, and nothing that they either do or can do, but what is of such a character and tendency as to afford sufficient ground for subjecting them to the sentence which the law of God denounces against transgression. The same doctrine is taught explicitly in the thirteenth article of the Church of England: —Art. XIII. Of Works before Justification: "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God

hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." The same doctrine is thus set forth, in connection with the principal grounds on which it rests, with admirable fulness, propriety, and precision in our own Confession:— "Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others" (such, for instance, as giving money for the relief of the poor or the spread of the gospel); "yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God."

Protestants have always maintained that their doctrine upon this subject is clearly contained in, and necessarily deducible from, the general representations which Scripture gives us of the moral character and condition of men as they come into the world, and is established also by scriptural declarations bearing very directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute. The Papists, in order to maintain their position that all works done before justification are not sins, are obliged to assert that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial, and that man did not wholly, but only in part, lose the image of God by the fall. Everything in Scripture which proves the complete or total corruption of man's moral nature, —winch shows that he is, as our Confession says, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," —equally proves, that until God's gracious power is put forth to renew him, all his actions are only and wholly sinful. If the corruption is total and complete, as the Scripture represents it, then there is nothing in man, until he be quickened and renewed, winch either is good, or can of itself produce or elicit anything good. Our Saviour has said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and in saying so He has laid down a great principle, which, viewed in connection with what can be shown to be the ordinary meaning of "the flesh" in Scripture, just amounts in substance to this, that corrupt human nature, as it is and by itself, can produce nothing but what is corrupt; and He asserted the same general principle with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when He said, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth

good fruit."

The statement of the apostle is very strong and explicit: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." There can be no reasonable doubt about the meaning of the word "flesh,"— no reasonable doubt that it means not only the body with its appetites, but the whole man, with all his faculties and tendencies, in his natural or unrenewed condition; and if so, the apostle here explicitly asserts of himself, and, in himself, of every other partaker of human nature, that antecedently to, and apart from, the regenerating grace of God changing his nature, there was no good thing in him, and that, of course, there could no good thing come out of him. -The same doctrine is also explicitly taught by the same apostle when he says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And again "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These statements are plainly intended to describe the natural state or condition of men, antecedently to the operations of divine grace upon their understandings and hearts, with respect to their power or capacity of knowing, loving, obeying, and pleasing God, and actually doing so; in short, with respect to their doing anything good, or discharging any duty which He requires, or effecting anything that may really avail for their deliverance and salvation; and the description plainly and explicitly given of men's condition is this, that men are actually destitute of any such power or capacity, —that they do, and can do, nothing to realize these results.

Men are very apt, when they read such statements in the word of God, to act upon some vague impression that they are not to be taken literally, but that they must be understood with some qualifications, —that they should in some way or other be explained away. But a vague impression of this sort is wholly unreasonable. When the words are once proved or admitted to be a part of God's recorded testimony, our only business is to ascertain what is really their meaning. If any limitation is to be put upon the natural proper meaning of the words, the grounds and reasons of the proposed limitation must be distinctly specified and defined, and must be

clearly apprehended by the understanding. And the only source from which a valid or legitimate limitation of their import can be derived is the word of God itself; i.e., materials must be produced from the context, or from other portions of the sacred Scriptures, to prove that they are not to be taken in all the latitude of their natural proper meaning, and to mark out to what extent the limitation is to be carried. God says that in us, that is, in our flesh or natural character, —in the whole of man in his unrenewed state, —there dwelleth no good thing. If this statement is not to be taken in its proper literal meaning; in other words, if it is to be maintained, —and this is virtually the position taken by the Romanists, and all others who either deny or in any measure explain away the total and complete depravity of human nature, —that in our flesh or natural character there does dwell some good thing, then it is plainly incumbent upon those who take this ground, to produce explicit and satisfactory proof from Scripture that there is some good thing in fallen and unrenewed men; ' and that, of course, this being established, the apostle's statement is to be taken with some limitation; or else they justly expose themselves to the woe denounced against men who call evil good.

Romanists, and others who adopt similar views upon this subject, usually content themselves with the general statement, that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial; endeavouring to defend this general position by bringing out what they allege it is necessary for men to have, in order to their being responsible, without in general attempting to define how far the corruption goes and where it stops, or to mark out what there is of good that still characterizes fallen and unrenewed men. They do not usually dispute absolutely, or as a general position, that man by his fall forfeited and lost the image of God; but they commonly assert that some traces or features of this image still remained, —a position which Protestants in a certain sense admit; and some of them, as Bellarmine, have attempted to give plausibility and definiteness to this notion, or rather have retracted or explained away the concession that man has lost the image of God, by inventing a distinction, which has no foundation in Scripture, between the image of God and the likeness of God; and asserting that man has lost the latter, the likeness, but not the former, the image. Moehler admits that this position is fairly involved in the doctrine of the Council of Trent, —viz., that " fallen man

still bears the image of God and he professes to give great credit to Calvin for teaching a more rational and Catholic doctrine with respect to the natural condition of man than Luther, by admitting that the image of God in man was not wholly obliterated. He represents Luther as the more erroneous and extravagant, but, at the same time, the more consistent, in his views upon this subject, and describes Calvin as only involving himself in confusion and inconsistency by the partially sounder views which he entertained in regard to the remains of the divine image in fallen men. In order to lay a plausible ground for these allegations, Moehler perverts the views both of Luther and Calvin, and their respective followers, upon this subject, bending them in opposite directions, and thus increasing the apparent discrepancy between them. He represents Luther as denying the existence in fallen man of any religious or moral capacities or faculties, as if he had become literally like a stock or a stone, or an irrational animal, —an imputation which has no fair and solid foundation, though it may have some apparent countenance in one or two rash and incautious expressions; and he represents Calvin as admitting the existence of remains of the divine image in fallen man in such a sense as to be inconsistent with his total depravity.

But the truth is, that Calvin manifested no inconsistency either with Luther, or with himself, in treating of this subject. Calvin did not admit that traces and remains of the divine image were to be found in fallen man in any sense which, either in his own apprehension or in the nature and truth of the case, was in the least inconsistent with maintaining the entire depravity of human nature, or the absence of all that was really good in unrenewed men, and the utter sinfulness of all their actions. The only difference between Luther and Calvin upon this subject lies in what we have repeatedly had occasion to advert to, —viz., that Luther not unfrequently indulged in strong and paradoxical language, without paying due regard to the exact import of his expressions; while Calvin's wonderful perspicacity, and soundness, and comprehensiveness of judgment, communicated in general to his statements an exactness and precision to which Luther never attained. The remains of the divine image which Calvin admitted were still to be found in fallen man, consisted not in any actual remaining tendency to what was truly good,

nor in the possible realization by his own strength, and through the mere operation of his natural principles, of any knowledge, righteousness, or holiness, which was really in accordance with what God required of him; but chiefly in the general structure of his mental faculties, —in those natural capacities of acquiring a knowledge of truth and God, and loving and serving Him, which constitute Him, in contradistinction to the lower animals, a rational and, in a certain sense, a religious being, and make him a proper subject, a suitable recipient, of those gracious operations of the divine Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth, by which he may be renewed, or made over again, after God's image. In this sense Calvin admitted, and so have Protestant divines in general, that fallen man retains features of the divine image— which plainly enough indicate the high place originally assigned to him in the creation, —in his relation to God, his intrinsic fitness or subjective capacity, in virtue of his mental and moral constitution, for acting suitably to that relation, and of course the possibility of his being again enabled to do so, without an entire reconstruction of the general framework of his mental constitution and faculties, though not without most important changes which God's gracious power alone can effect. In this sense, but in no other, man may be said to retain the traces or remains of the image of God; but there is nothing in all this in the least inconsistent with what Calvin and Protestants in general have regarded as clearly taught in Scripture with respect to the total depravity of human nature, —man's natural want of any actual available capacity in himself for what is truly good, —and the consequent sinfulness of all his actions, of all the actual outgoings of his natural principles, until he is renewed by God's grace in the spirit of his mind. That this was Calvin's mind upon the subject, is perfectly plain from repeated and explicit statements, —nay, even from those quoted by Moehler himself, in support of the account he gives of Calvin's doctrine: "Quin Adam, ubi excidit e gradu suo, hac defectione a Deo alienatus sit, minime dubium est. Quare etsi demus non prorsus exinanitam ac deletam in eo fuisse Dei imaginem, sic tamen corrupta fuit, ut quicquid superest, horrenda sit deformitas.....Ergo quum Dei imago sit integra naturae humanae praestantia, quae refulsit in Adam ante defectionem, postea sic vitiata et prope deleta, ut nihil ex ruina nisi confusum, mutilum, labeque infectum supersit."

Romanists are fond of dwelling, in support of their doctrine upon this subject, upon the religious sense manifested by all nations, in all varieties of outward circumstances, as indicated by their religious rites and ceremonies; and upon the examples of virtue or virtuous actions given by some of the celebrated men of heathen antiquity. But it can derive no efficient support from these quarters; for the question really comes to this, Can it be proved, and can it be proved by evidence sufficient to warrant us in contradicting or modifying the explicit declarations of Scripture assuring us, that in men's natural or unrenewed character there dwelleth no good thing, that there is anything really good in the actions here referred to, whether of a moral or of a religious kind? And in order to settle this question, we must take the scriptural standard of what is good, and apply it to them, remembering at the same time that the onus probandi lies upon those who affirm their goodness, since it cannot be reasonably disputed that the word of God seems plainly *prima facie* to deny it, in those general statements which have been quoted or referred to. When the question is considered in this light, and discussed on these conditions, there is no difficulty in showing that Romanists are unable to establish the doctrine upon this subject to which the Council of Trent has committed them. If good works, in accordance with the scriptural standard, be, in conformity with what is implied in the statement formerly quoted from our Confession, those only which proceed from a heart purified by faith, which are done in a right manner, according to the word, and to a right end— the glory of God, then it is manifestly impossible to prove that any actions, whether of a moral or a religious kind, that were truly good, have ever been performed by any but men of whom there was every competent reason to believe that they had been born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.

The doctrine, then, taught by the Reformers, and anathematized by the Council of Trent, —that works done before justification, and of course all the actions of unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure and condemnation of God, —is clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, and ought to be laid down as a fixed principle in all our investigations into the way and manner in which men are delivered from their natural condition of guilt and depravity, affording as it does a sufficient proof that there can be no such thing as what Popish

theologians usually call merit of congruity, or *meritum de congruo*, —i.e., a superior measure of antecedent moral worth and excellence, rendering some men more congruous or suitable recipients of divine grace than others; and that the origin of all that is truly good in men, and really bears with a favourable influence upon their salvation, must be traced to the special grace or favour of God in Christ, and to the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit.

Dr Chalmers has discussed very fully, upon a variety of occasions, the right mode of stating and enforcing, —especially with a view to the conviction of irreligious men, —the true moral character and condition of those who have not yet received the grace of God; and has brought forward upon this subject some views of great practical value and importance. He has more particularly laboured to show the propriety and desirableness, with a view to producing a practical impression on the understandings and consciences of irreligious men, of fully admitting the important differences that may be observed in them in regard to integrity, benevolence, generosity, and similar qualities, and in regard to the discharge of social and domestic duties; and urged strenuously the importance of chiefly enforcing upon them, with a view to their conviction, the ungodliness with which they are all, and all equally, chargeable; while he has presented some very striking portraits of the extent to which qualities and conduct, —amiable and useful, well fitted to call forth respect and esteem, —may exist without anything resulting from a right sense of men's relation to God, and of the duty they owe to Him. In his very important and interesting exposition of these topics, he was not called upon to advert to those views of the subject which I have had occasion to explain; and he has, in consequence, been led to make some statements which might seem at first sight scarcely reconcilable with the position I have endeavoured to illustrate. There is, however, no real discrepancy, —any apparent discrepancy arising solely from the different aspects in which the subject has been contemplated, and the different purposes to which it has been applied. I entirely concur in all the positions Dr Chalmers has laid down upon the subject, though I do not approve of all his phraseology, and especially doubt the propriety of calling anything in the character of unrenewed men good, absolutely or without explanation, when the apostle has so expressly asserted that in

our flesh there dwelleth no good thing; or of applying this epithet, or any synonymous one, to any actions which do not correspond with the description of good works that has been quoted from our Confession of Faith.

## **VII. Sinfulness of Works after Regeneration**

The second practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the doctrine of original sin, was, —that even after men have been justified and regenerated, there is still something sinful about all of them so long as they continue upon earth, staining their whole character and actions with what is in its own nature displeasing to God and deserving of punishment, and is therefore necessarily exclusive of merit and supererogation; and this position we propose now briefly to illustrate.

It is of course not denied that there is something, —nay, much, — that is really good, or really accordant with the requirements of God's law, in men who have been born again. Their hearts have been purified by faith; their actions are, to a considerable extent, really regulated by the right standard, —the word of God, —and directed to a right end, —the promotion of His glory. They are dwelt in by the Spirit of God, who works in them; and the results of His operation, —so far as they are His, —must be good. They have been created again in Christ Jesus unto good works, and they walk in them. All this is true; but it is also true, that even they are daily breaking God's commandments in thought, word, and deed; and that their actions, even the best of them, are stained with imperfection and sin. Luther, on this point, as well as on that formerly discussed, had made some rash and incautious statements, and it has ever since been the general practice of Popish writers to misrepresent Protestants by charging them with maintaining that there are no good works performed even by regenerate men, but that all their actions are mortal sins. This is an inaccurate and unfair representation of the Protestant doctrine, although some of Luther's statements may have given it some apparent countenance. Protestants do not dispute that renewed men, out of the good treasure of their hearts, bring forth good things; that they perform actions which are called good in the word of God, and of course are good, even when tried by the scriptural standard. What they contend for is, that

even renewed men have also something about them that is evil; and that all their actions, even the best of them, though good in the main, have got about them something sinful and defective, and come so far short of what the law of God requires, that, when viewed simply in themselves, and tried by that high and holy standard, they must be pronounced to be sinful, and, so far as intrinsic merit is concerned, to deserve, not reward, but punishment.

The Council of Trent anathematizes "any who say that a righteous man, in every good work, sins at least venially, or, what is more intolerable, mortally, and therefore deserves eternal punishment; and that he is not condemned only because God does not impute these works to his condemnation." Now, Protestants do not admit, but, on the contrary, utterly deny, the Popish distinction between mortal and venial sins, so far as concerns their proper nature and intrinsic demerit; and it is, of course, unwarrantable and unfair to ascribe to them, directly or by implication, the use or employment of such a distinction. They believe that every sin, —i.e., any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God, — is in its own nature mortal, and deserving of God's wrath and curse; and might, when viewed by itself, and apart from God's revealed purposes and arrangements, and His previous actual dealings and engagements with men, be, without any injustice, made the ground of a sentence of condemnation. If, then, any of them should assert that the sin which they ascribe to all the good works, even of righteous or regenerate men, is not venial but mortal sin, they must mean by this nothing more than that it is truly sin, and not a mere defect or infirmity which need not be much regarded, as it does not imply a real transgression of, or want of conformity to, the requirements of God's law; and there is a sense in which Protestants do not regard the good works of regenerate persons, though polluted with sin, as mortal sins, —viz., if respect be had to their actual effects, and not to their intrinsic nature and demerit. Regenerate persons have been justified and admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour, —they have been adopted into His family, and they are regarded and treated by Him as His children. They are in Christ Jesus, and there is now no condemnation for them. Their sins are not now imputed to them or charged against them, to their condemnation, and do not, in point of fact, subject them to death and the curse of God. But if there be anything

about them, in their character, principles, motives, or actions, which is really sinful, then they must deserve condemnation; and if they are not, in point of fact, subjected to it, then this must be, in spite of the anathema of the Council of Trent, because it is not imputed to them, or put down to their account, —charged against them with a view to their being condemned.

Another injustice commonly practised by Romish writers, — though not, it must be admitted, by the Council of Trent, —in explaining the state of the question upon this subject, is to represent Protestants as maintaining the general position, that the good works of righteous or regenerate men are mortal sins, and at the same time to insinuate that Protestants give this as the true and proper description of them. Now, Protestants do not deny that all regenerate men perform good works, and they admit that good works are good works, and should be so described. Of course they cannot be both good works and sins in the same respect; but it is quite possible that they may be, and therefore may be justly called, good, as being to a large extent, and with respect to their leading distinguishing characteristics, good, accordant with God's commandments; and yet may in some way so come short of the requirements of the divine law as to be chargeable with sin, so that they may truly be said to be sins. When the question, indeed, is put generally and indefinitely, What they are? they should be described according to their leading and most palpable characters; and the answer to the question should just be, that they are good works. But if it be true also that there is something sinful about them, then the assertion that they are good works, though it be the true and proper answer to the question, What are they? does not contain the whole truth, —does not give a full and complete description of them; and of course this additional important element requires to be introduced.

Protestants, then, do not give it as the true and proper description of the good works of regenerate men, that they are sins, though this is the way in which the matter is usually represented by Bellarmine and other Popish controversialists. They say that they are good works; but finding, as they believe, abundant evidence in Scripture that they have all something sinful about them, they think they may also, without any impropriety, be called sins; not as if this was their leading primary

character, —that by which they should be ordinarily and directly denominated, —but simply as being one true and real feature that ought to enter into a full description of them, inasmuch as, notwithstanding their substantial goodness or accordance with the requirements of God's law, they are also stained or polluted with what is sinful, and, therefore, in its own nature deserving of condemnation. The Council of Trent has not formally and precisely laid down, in a direct and positive form, the doctrine which it intended to teach in opposition to that which it anathematized in the canon above quoted; but by anathematizing the position that a righteous man sins in every good work, —by maintaining that a regenerate man is able in this life to fulfil the whole law of God, and to merit or deserve by his good works increase of grace and eternal life, — they fully warrant us in ascribing to the Church of Rome, as one of its recognised and binding doctrines, the position, — that men in this life may be entirely free from sin, and may and do perform, actions which are not stained or polluted with anything sinful, or really deserving of condemnation attaching to them. Now, the opposite doctrine, —viz., that even regenerate men have all something sinful about them, and that even their good works are all stained or polluted with an admixture of sin attaching to them, —was maintained by all the Reformers, and was strongly urged by them as overturning from the foundation the notions that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome about the merit of good works.

The subject divides itself into two parts, —the first including the moral constitution of renewed men, as comprehending their tendencies, affections, and incipient desires; and the second their actual motives and completed actions. In regard to the first of these parts or divisions of the subject, the question in dispute is identical with that which we discussed when examining the decree of the Council of Trent on original sin, and showing, in opposition to its decision, that baptism or regeneration does not wholly remove original corruption or depravity, and that concupiscence in the regenerate, as it was then explained, is sin. This point is of essential importance in regard to the whole question; and, indeed, it may be said to determine it: for if concupiscence, which is allowed to remain in the regenerate, is sin, as the Council of Trent admits that the Apostle Paul calls it, it must stain with an admixture of sinful

pollution all the actions which they perform, until they have entirely escaped from the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. And Bellarmine accordingly admits that it is needful to the successful maintenance of the Popish doctrine, that the good works of regenerate men are not certainly and universally polluted with what is sinful, to remove out of the way the alleged sinfulness of concupiscence, and to show that it is not a sin, but only an infirmity or defect.

As, however, we have already considered fully this subject of the sinfulness of concupiscence, we need not now dwell upon it at greater length, but may proceed to advert to the second branch of the subject, — viz., the actual motives and the completed actions of regenerate men; the actual motives differing from concupiscence, as including the first risings or motions of desires directed towards what is evil or unlawful, in this, that they are deliberately cherished in the mind, that they are fully consented to, and are necessarily connected with the outward actions of which they form the true proximate causes, and of which they determine the moral character. The direct Scripture proofs usually adduced by Romanists in support of the doctrine of their Church upon this point, are taken from those passages of Scripture which describe some men as perfectly blameless and pleasing to God, and their actions as good works, conformable to His law and acceptable in His sight, and those in which some of the saints appeal to, and plead, their own innocence and righteousness. There is, however, no statement in Scripture which clearly and definitely teaches, directly or by necessary consequence, that any man ever existed upon earth in a condition in which he had not something sinful about him, or ever performed an action which was free from an admixture of sinful pollution. Some of the scriptural statements to which Romanists refer in discussing this subject, might seem to warrant their conclusion, if there was no more information given us in Scripture regarding it than what is contained in them. But, —as we had occasion to remark before upon a similar topic, when considering the alleged effects of baptism or regeneration upon original corruption, and establishing the sinfulness of concupiscence, —they do not bear so directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute as to preclude the competence of producing, or even to make it unlikely that there may be actually produced, from other parts of Scripture, evidence that even the

good works of regenerate men are stained with sinful pollution. At the most, these general statements about perfection, innocence, and good works, pleasing to God, etc., can have the effect only of throwing the onus probandi upon those who deny that the good works of regenerate men are wholly free from sin; and any further use or application of them, in the first instance, should be the more carefully guarded against, because the general tendency of men is to overrate their own excellence, and because the general tendency of the leading views presented in the word of God is to counteract this natural tendency of men. Our duty is to ascertain the whole of what God's word teaches upon every subject on which it touches, and to receive every doctrine which it inculcates as resting upon divine authority. We can be said to know the word of God upon any topic only when we have accurately ascertained the meaning and import of all that He has stated or indicated in His word regarding it, and when we have combined the different portions of information given us there—admitting each of them in its due order and connection—into the general view which we lay down of the whole subject to which they relate.

Some instances there are, in which, when we collect together and combine into a general statement or doctrine the whole of the different portions of the information which the word of God furnishes upon some particular topic, we find it difficult to comprehend how the different truths or portions of truth which enter into the general doctrine can consist with each other or be brought into harmonious combination. But we must be careful of imagining that this of itself affords any sufficient reason for rejecting any one of them, —a notion which virtually assumes that our faculties, or powers of distinct comprehension, constitute the measure or standard of what is true or possible. If it can be shown from Scripture that the good works of regenerate men are still stained by some admixture of what is sinful, then this must be received as a portion of what Scripture teaches regarding them; it must enter into anything like a full statement of the Scripture doctrine upon the subject; and it must be allowed to explain or modify somewhat those general and indefinite statements about perfection and innocence, goodness and acceptableness, which, had no such doctrine been also taught in Scripture, might have seemed to point to a different conclusion. It is quite possible that the actions may be good and acceptable in their general

character and leading features, so as to be rightly denominated, ordinarily and generally, by these terms, though it may be also true that they are not wholly free from sinful imperfection or pollution. They may have comparative or relative, though not unqualified or absolute, perfection and innocence; and this, indeed, is the only way in which the whole doctrine taught in God's word regarding them can be consistently and harmoniously embodied in a doctrinal statement. And it is remarkable that most of the arguments which Bellarmine founds upon the scriptural passages he adduces in support of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, require as their medium of probation, as the intervening idea through which alone they can be made to bear upon the point in dispute, that unfair misrepresentation of the proper status quaestionis which I have already exposed.

For instance, having adduced those passages which undoubtedly speak of the good works of regenerate persons, as being good, excellent, and pleasing to God, he argues in this way: " Si opera omnia justorum essent peccata mortalia" (this is the position he ascribes to Protestants, and then the inference he draws is), "dicenda essent potius mala, quam bona. . . . Quomodo igitur Scriptura praedicat absolute opera bona, si non sunt bona, nisi secundum quid, sed absolute, et simpliciter mala? Omnino necesse est, ut vel Spiritus Sanctus in hac parte fallatur, vel Lutherus, et Calvinus erret. "Now, we can with perfect ease escape from both the horns of this dilemma; we are under no necessity of either maintaining that the Holy Spirit erred, or of admitting that Luther and Calvin erred, upon this subject. We admit that the works in question are, in their general character and leading features, good and pleasing to God, and of course may, and should be said, simply and generally, to be so: and this, we think, is all that can be shown to be necessarily implied in the scriptural passages which Bellarmine adduces; while we think, also, in perfect consistency with this, that there are sufficient materials furnished by the Holy Ghost in Scripture for proving that they are likewise mala, not absolute et simpliciter, according to the doctrine which Bellarmine unwarrantably ascribes to Luther and Calvin, but only secundum quid. In short, Luther and Calvin took in the whole doctrine of Scripture upon this subject, while Bellarmine and the Church of Rome have received only a portion of it; and have interpreted and applied that portion in such a way

as to make it contradict what is also and equally taught in Scripture, and to be received with the same implicit submission.

The Church of Rome, then, can produce no "sufficient evidence from Scripture in support of the doctrine which it teaches. Let us now briefly advert to the scriptural grounds on which the Protestant doctrine rests, without, however, attempting anything like a full exposition of them. The statements made by the Apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans are sufficient, not only to prove the proper sinfulness of concupiscence, — although, as we have observed, the proof of the proper sinfulness of concupiscence is sufficient of itself to prove that there is some sinful admixture about all the actions of regenerate men, — but also to prove more directly the sinful deficiency and imperfection of all the actions which he performed, —and more especially his statements, "That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do;" and, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." The force of this statement, so far as concerns the point now under consideration, lies very much in the word *κατεργάζεσθαι*, which means to work out thoroughly, or to carry a work out to completeness and perfection; and if the apostle, even when his will was to do good, did not find that he could even attain to completeness or perfection in his strivings after conformity to what God requires, this is the same thing as telling us that all his good works had still something sinful, or sinfully defective, attaching to them, and polluting them. The same conclusion is established by what we are taught in Scripture concerning the experience of David, and other inspired servants of God, who, —while they did on some occasions appeal to their own innocence or righteousness viewed comparatively, or as contrasted with the character of their enemies, and with the accusations which these enemies brought against them, —have also made it manifest, that they knew and felt that there was nothing about them, and no action they had ever performed or could perform, which could bear to be strictly investigated in the sight of God, or which did not stand in need of His unmerited mercy and compassion in order to its being accepted, and being not imputed to them, or charged against them, as an adequate ground of condemnation.

This doctrine is also established by what we are taught in Scripture, in many various ways and forms, as to the exceeding length and breadth of the requirements of God's law, and the actual conformity or obedience rendered to it even by renewed men; and this, of course, furnishes the leading direct and general proof of the position. A want of conformity to the divine law is sin, as well as a transgression of it; and the simple recollection that the divine law requires of men at all times to love God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and that of course the absence or defect of this supreme love, as a feature of character, or as the principle and motive of an action, implies the existence of a sinful want of conformity to what God requires, or of a sinful neglect of a duty which is incumbent, should be sufficient of itself to exclude from our minds all idea that even renewed men ever have performed, or can perform, any actions which are unstained by sinful imperfection and pollution. The experience, indeed, of the best men in all ages, viewed in connection with the scriptural statements as to the duty which God requires of us, is decidedly opposed to this proud and presumptuous notion; and it can scarcely be conceived to be possible that any man, who had ever felt anything of the power of religion, or been impressed with scriptural views of what God requires, and especially of that supreme and paramount love to Himself which ought ever to reign in our heart, and be the real source and the characterizing principle of all our actions, should venture to select any action he had ever performed, and assert that, viewed in its source and motive, in its substance and circumstances, it was unpolluted with sin, and in full conformity with the requirements of God's law. Bishop Davenant, in discussing this subject, does not hesitate to say, " *Qui in bonis suis actionibus hanc peccati adhaesionem non sentit, illum ego nunquam vel unam actionem bonam edidisse sentio.*"

The sum and substance of the answer which Popish divines give to the scriptural passages that assert or imply the sinfulness of all men, even the regenerate, and the sinful imperfection of all that they do, viewed in comparison with the standard of God's law, is this, —that what may be sinful about them is not mortal but venial sin, i.e., practically speaking, is no sin at all. Now, this indicates one of the reasons why Bellarmine was so anxious to represent Protestants as teaching the general position, that the good works of regenerate men are mortal sins, though the distinction

between mortal and venial sins is rejected by them, —while it also illustrates the widely injurious application which Papists make of this anti-scriptural and dangerous distinction. Bellarmine says, that if the good works of righteous men are, as Protestants allege, stained and polluted with sin, this must arise from innate concupiscence, or the deficiency or shortcoming of love to God, or from the admixture with them of venial sins. Now, this statement is, upon the whole, correct, except in virtually ascribing to Protestants the distinction between mortal and venial sins, as understood by Papists. At the same time, there is, as I have explained, a sense in which Protestants do not regard the sin which they impute to the good works of regenerate men as mortal; and they admit that, as the actions under consideration are, in the main, good, the sin which adheres to and pollutes them cannot be very heinous, as compared with other sins; though, if it be sin at all, it must, upon scriptural and Protestant principles, be in its own nature mortal, and deserving of the punishment which all sin merits. But, with this explanation and modification, Bellarmine's statement of the grounds and reasons of our ascription of sin to the good works of regenerate men, may be admitted to be substantially correct; and how does he dispose of them? By a simple and summary process in the application of the method of exhaustion. Concupiscence is not sin, but only an infirmity. The deficiency of our love to God, —or, as he chooses to explain it, or explain it away, our not loving Him so much as we will do when we reach heaven, —is a defect indeed, but not a fault and a sin, “defectus quidem est, sed culpa et peccatum non est;” and as to the venial sin that may be mixed up with these, why, “peccatum veniale non est contrarium caritati, nec proprie contra legem sed prater legem,” i.e., a venial sin is not contrary to charity or love, and is not properly against the law, but beside the law; or, in plain terms, is not a sin at all. This surely is to make the word of God of none effect by traditions, and to pervert the plainest and most important statements of Scripture; and to do this for the very purpose of eradicating Christian humility, inflating men with a most unwarranted and dangerous impression of their own worth and excellence, and cherishing a state of mind diametrically opposite to that which it is the manifest tendency and design of the whole gospel scheme of salvation to produce, and fraught with danger to men's souls. Nothing more need be said in opposition to a doctrine which requires to be defended by such

arguments as these.

But it may be proper to advert to the illustration, thus incidentally afforded us, of the extensive and injurious application made by the Papists of their distinction between mortal and venial sins. Bellarmine manifests his deep sense of the importance of this distinction to the cause of Popery, by devoting the whole of the very first of his six books, “De Amissione gratiae et statu peccati,” to the establishment of it; and it is, indeed, of much more importance in the Popish system than might at first sight appear. A great many scriptural statements require to be distorted or perverted, in order to procure for it something like countenance; and when it has been once proved or assumed, it is then employed, as we have seen, as a ready and convenient medium for distorting and perverting the meaning of many other portions of Scripture. Its direct, immediate, and most proper application, is to lead men to regard as very insignificant, and practically not sinful at all, many things which the word of God condemns as offensive to Him, and ruinous, if not repented of, to men's souls. The tendency of this is to deaden men's sense of moral responsibility, and to make them indifferent about their salvation, and careless about the means by which it is to be secured; or, what is virtually and practically the, same thing, it disposes them to believe that guilt, —which, upon scriptural principles, can be washed away only by the blood of Christ, and through the exercise of faith and repentance, —may be expiated by external ordinances, by personal or other human satisfactions, and by priestly absolution and intercession. And, in this way, it has a powerful tendency to seduce depraved men into Popery, to retain them there; while it enters largely into those corrupt influences by which the Popish system operates upon men's character and conduct, and accomplishes the design of its real author, by wrapping them up in security, and thus ruining their souls. By means of this distinction, a great deal of that in Scripture which is most directly fitted to arouse and alarm, is neutralized or enervated; a shield is provided to defend against the arrows of conviction, and a cloud is interposed to hide from men's view the true meaning of many portions of God's word, —the real import and right application of many statements which bear very directly upon the opening up of the true way of a sinner's salvation. If the doctrine of the Reformers, that an imperfection and pollution which is in

its own nature sinful, and therefore deserving of punishment, attaches to all the good works even of regenerate men, be true, it manifestly overturns the common Popish notions about merit and supererogation. It proves that men cannot perform anything that is truly meritorious, since it shows that all their actions— in whatever way God for Christ's sake, and in virtue of the union to Him of those who perform them, may be pleased to regard and accept them— are, when viewed simply in themselves, and according to their own real and intrinsic relation to the divine law, deserving of punishment and not of reward.

I have dwelt the longer upon these subjects, because they really occupied a very prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and because the reformed doctrine upon these points, which I have attempted to illustrate, was peculiarly offensive to the Romanists, as manifestly striking at the root of all those notions of human ability and human merit which the Romish Church has ever cherished, and on which a large portion of the system of Popery is based. If it be indeed true, as the word of God teaches us, that all the actions of unjustified and unregenerate men, —i.e., of men before they become the recipients and subjects of God's justifying and converting grace, —are only and wholly sinful, having nothing truly good about them; and if it be also true, that all the works of men, even after they are justified and regenerated, though really good in their general elements and leading features, are likewise stained and polluted with something that is sinful, —if all this be true, then it plainly and necessarily follows that there cannot be either *meritum de congruo*, with respect to what Papists call the first justification; or *meritum de condigno*, with respect to what they call the second justification; and that individual men, at every step of the process by which they are delivered from guilt and ruin, and prepared for the enjoyment of heaven, are regarded and treated by God, and of course should ever be regarded by themselves and others, as the objects of His unmerited compassion and kindness, —the unworthy recipients of His undeserved mercy and grace. And while here we have to do with these principles chiefly in their bearing upon the formation of an accurate conception of the gospel method of salvation, of the scriptural scheme of theology, we would not omit, in conclusion, simply to point out their obvious and important bearing upon matters more immediately personal

and practical. When these great principles are clearly understood and distinctly conceived, they must put an end at once to the laborious attempts, in which some men waste much time, of going about to establish a righteousness of their own, to prepare themselves, or to make themselves suitable or worthy, to receive the grace of God in Christ, instead of at once laying hold of the freely offered mercy and grace of the gospel; while in regard to others who, in the scriptural sense, are working out their own salvation through the grace of Christ administered to all who are united to Him by faith, they are well fitted to lead them to do so with "fear and trembling," by impressing them with a sense of the magnitude of the work, the arduousness of the struggle; and to constrain and enable them ever to cultivate profound humility, and a sense of their entire dependence upon the supplies of God's Spirit.

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