

The Doctrine of the Will



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by William Cunningham

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Introduction

The first three canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent are directed, very unnecessarily, against the Pelagians, and are similar in substance to the canons of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, by which Pelagian and semi-Pelagian error was condemned. There is nothing in them to which any of the Reformers objected, and the only notice which Calvin takes of them in his "Antidote" is by responding—Amen. These anti-Pelagian canons, viewed in connection with the place which they occupy in the decrees of the Council of Trent, furnish an instance of what the history of theology has very often exhibited, —viz., of men being constrained by the force of the plain statements of Scripture in regard to the natural destitution and helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace as the source of all the holiness and all the happiness to which they ever attain, to make large admissions in favour of what all Calvinists, but not they exclusively, regard as the scriptural doctrine upon these subjects; admissions which, if followed out in a

manly and upright way, would lead to thorough soundness of opinion regarding them, but which those who have been constrained to make them endeavour afterwards to explain away or to neutralize by the introduction of erroneous notions, which are really inconsistent with the admissions that had been wrung from them. This was very fully exhibited in most of the works written in the course of last century, and even in the present one, by divines of the Church of England, against the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, under the name of Calvinism, —as, for instance, in Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism. Many of these men, in deference to the plain meaning of scriptural language, made statements about the natural helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace, which in their fair and honest meaning involved all that Calvinists have ever contended for upon these subjects, while they explained them away by the maintenance of positions which, if really true, should have prevented the admissions they had made. The books that have been written by Episcopalians against Calvinism are usually more Pelagian, and more thoroughly opposed to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, than the decrees of the Council of Trent. In its first three canons it admits that men cannot be justified by their own works without divine grace through Christ; that this grace of God through Christ is necessary, not only to enable men to do what is good more easily than they could have done without it, but to enable them to do it at all; and that without the preventing inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, a man cannot believe, hope, love, or repent, as it is necessary that he should do, in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him. And these doctrines, combined with what they had laid down in the previous session about original sin, as we have already explained it, seem sufficient, if fairly understood and applied, to overturn all notions of human ability and human merit. But we have already seen, in several instances, how they corrupt and pervert these general truths, which are expressed with a good deal of vagueness and generality, by laying down positions of a more definite and limited description, marked by an opposite tendency in their bearing upon the method of a sinner's salvation. And in a similar way we find that the three anti-Pelagian canons, with which they begin their deliverance upon justification, are immediately followed by two on the subject of free-will, in which the way is paved for introducing justification by works and human merit, and for

ascribing, partly at least, to the powers and deserts of men themselves, and not wholly to the grace of God, the salvation of sinners.

This subject of free-will is, as it were, the connecting link between the doctrines of original sin and of divine grace— between men's natural condition as fallen, involved in guilt and depravity, and the way in which they are restored to favour, to holiness, and happiness. There is perhaps no subject which has occupied more of the time and attention of men of speculation. I shall not attempt anything like a general discussion of this extensive and intricate subject, but will merely endeavour to explain the views which were generally held upon this topic by the Reformers, and which have been embodied in the Confessions of the Protestant churches, as contrasted with those taught by the Church of Rome and by Arminians.

There is one general observation, in regard to the way in which the subject was discussed at the time of the Reformation, that ought to be attended to, —viz., that the Reformers did not discuss it as a question in metaphysics, but as a question in theology; and that even with respect to what may be called its theological aspects, they did not give themselves much concern about any other view of it, than that in which it enters into the description which ought to be given from the word of God of fallen man— of man as we now find him; and as thus bearing upon the actual process by which he is restored to the favour and the image of God. And regarding the subject in this light, they were unanimous in asserting it as a doctrine of Scripture, that the will of man is in entire bondage with respect to all spiritual things, because of his depravity, —that fallen man, antecedently to the operation of divine grace, while perfectly free to will and to do evil, has no freedom of will by which he can do anything really good, or dispose or prepare himself for turning from sin and for receiving the grace of God. This was the doctrine of all the Reformers, —it is embodied in all the Reformed Confessions, —and is fully and explicitly set forth in the Confession of our own Church; and this, and this alone, is what the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions mean when, upon scriptural grounds, they deny to men, as they are, all freedom or liberty of will, —when they assert the entire servitude or bondage of the will of unrenewed men in reference to anything spiritually good. Other topics,

both of a metaphysical and a theological kind, may have been introduced into the discussion of this question, and may have been appealed to as affording proofs or presumptions either on the one side or the other; but the true and proper question at issue was, whether man, fallen and unregenerate, had or had not any freedom or liberty of will in the sense and to the effect above explained. The Reformers asserted, and undertook to prove, the negative upon this question, and undertook to prove it from Scripture, as a portion of God's revealed truth, —not disdaining, indeed, but still not much concerned about, any corroboration which their doctrine might derive from psychological or metaphysical investigations into men's mental constitution and mental processes, and fully satisfied that a scriptural proof of this one position, which they thought themselves quite able to produce, afforded by itself an adequate basis, in an argumentative point of view, for those ulterior conclusions which they also derived from Scripture, in regard to the whole process of a sinner's salvation;— in short, for a full exposition of all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

This doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen man, with reference to anything spiritually good, they regarded as involved in, or deducible from, the scriptural doctrine of the entire and complete depravity of human nature; while they taught also that it had its own distinct and appropriate scriptural evidence. The Council of Trent plainly insinuated, though it did not venture explicitly to assert, that the loss of the divine image in fallen man, or the corruption or depravity of his nature, was not total, but only partial; and there is one application which the council made of this virtual denial of the entire depravity of human nature, in their decision about the moral character of the works of unregenerate men, denying that they were wholly and altogether sinful. But the main use and application which they intended to make, and which they have made, of it, was as a foundation for the position which they laid down in opposition to the Reformers, that fallen man has still some freedom of will even in reference to what is spiritually good, —some natural power to do God's will, —and can thus do something which really and causally contributes to, or exerts a favourable influence upon, his own salvation. The Church of Rome would not have been very unwilling to have asserted more strongly and explicitly the corruption of human

nature, —since she had effectually provided for taking it wholly away in baptism, —had it not been that a denial of man's entire corruption was necessary in order to the maintenance of her idol of free-will, or the assertion of the doctrine that fallen man has still some natural power to do what is spiritually good. The Council of Trent, accordingly, has expressly asserted that fallen man retains some freedom or liberty of will; but, according to the policy which was pursued in the formation of its decisions upon original sin, it has left this whole subject in so dubious and unsatisfactory a condition, that it is not very easy to say precisely what is its doctrine upon this subject, except that it is opposed to that of the Reformers. The council contents itself with anathematizing those who say that the freewill of man was lost and extinguished after the fall of Adam; that free-will— *liberum arbitrium*— is, as Luther called it, a mere name, or a title without a reality, or was a figment introduced by Satan into the church; and with asserting that free-will in fallen man, " *minime extinctum esse, viribus licet attenuatum et inclinatum.*" Now, considering the discussions which had taken place, not only among the schoolmen, but between the Reformers and the Romanists, previously to the council, on the subject of free-will, the different meanings that might be, and have been, attached to the expression, and the different kinds or degrees of bondage or necessity that might be opposed to it (and all this had been fully explained and illustrated by Calvin in his very important treatise, " *De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii*" published in 1543, in reply to Pighius, who attended the council), a decision so vague and general as this could scarcely be said to decide anything directly. The Reformers did not deny that fallen man still retained the will or the power of volition as a mental faculty, —that this continued, with all its essential properties, as a part of the general structure or framework of the mental constitution - with which man was created. They admitted that the exercise of the will as a mental faculty, or the exercise of the power of volition, implied, in the very nature of the case, liberty or freedom in a certain sense, —i.e., what was commonly called spontaneity or freedom from necessity, in the sense of coercion or compulsion. This is the substance of the truth which is intended to be taught in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down, as its first and fundamental position upon the subject of free-will, the following doctrine, —viz., that " God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity

of nature determined to good or evil." This is evidently intended as a great general truth, applicable to the will of man universally and in all circumstances, after as well as before the fall; and it asserts of man, thus generally considered, little if anything more than what is necessarily implied in his really possessing a power of volition, —a natural capacity of willing or choosing, and of doing this undetermined by any external constraint. The general structure or framework of man's mental constitution, including his power of volition, remains unaffected by the fall; and this power of volition continues to belong to him as a rational being, or to be exercised by him in connection with all that rationality implies. Man by the fall was not changed into a stock or a stone, or into an irrational animal; he retained that rational power of volition which was a part of the general framework of his mental constitution, and in virtue of which he had, and still has, a natural capacity of willing and choosing spontaneously, and of carrying out his volitions into action. Man retained this natural power or capacity, and he was not, in consequence of the fall, subjected in the exercise of it to any external force or compulsion— to any influence out of himself, and apart from the exercise, of his own power of volition, and from his own actual choice, which determined infallibly whether he should do good or evil.

These, then, are the two points asserted in the statement of our Confession in regard to that natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, —viz., that there is nothing in the inherent structure of the natural power of volition itself, as it exists even in fallen man, and that there is no external force or compulsion exerted upon him, which certainly deprives him of a capacity of doing good as well as of doing evil. If it be true, as it certainly is, that fallen and unrenewed men do always in point of fact will or choose what is evil, and never what is good, the cause of this is not to be traced to any natural incapacity in their will or power of volition to will or choose good as well as evil, nor to any external force or compulsion brought to bear upon them from any quarter; for this would be inconsistent with that natural liberty with which God originally endued the will of man, and which it still retains and must retain. It must be traced to something else. The Reformers admitted all this, and in this sense would not have objected to the doctrine of the freedom of the will, though, as the phrase was then commonly used in a different sense as

implying much more than this, —as implying a

doctrine which they believed to be unscriptural and dangerous, — they generally thought it preferable to abstain from the use of the expression altogether, or to deny the freedom of the will, and to assert its actual bondage or servitude because of depravity, or as a consequence of the fall. I may here remark by the way, though I do not mean to enter upon the discussion of the topic, that orthodox Protestant divines have usually held that this spontaneity, —this freedom from necessity in the sense of coercion or compulsion from any necessity, arising either from the natural structure and inherent capacity of the power of volition, or from the application of external force, —together with the power of giving effect to his volitions, is all that is necessary to make man responsible for his actions; and though this is a subject involved in extreme difficulties, I think it may be safely asserted that this at least has been proved, —viz., that no proof has been adduced that more than this is necessary as a foundation for responsibility, — no evidence has been brought forward that a rational being of whom this may be truly predicated, is not responsible for the evil which he performs— for the sins which he commits.

There is, however, another aspect in which the decision of the Council of Trent, asserting that free-will, though weakened, is not extinguished in fallen man, is chargeable with being vague and unsatisfactory; and this brings us nearer to the main topic of controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome. Though Luther and Melancthon had originally made some very strong and rash statements upon this subject, in which they seemed to assert the bondage of the will, and the necessity of men's actions in every sense, and to deny to men liberty or freedom in any sense, they had, long before the Council of Trent assembled, modified their views upon this subject, and had expressed themselves with greater caution and exactness. Indeed, in the Confession of Augsburg, —the most formal and solemn exposition of the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, — they had expressly said, "*De libero arbitrio docent, quod humana voluntas habeat aliquam libertatem ad efficiendam civilem justitiam, et diligendas res rationi subjectas. Sed non habet vim sine Spiritu Sancto efficiendae justitiae spiritualis.*" And, in accordance with this notion, it

was common among the Reformers to ascribe to the will of man a certain power or freedom in actions of an external, civil, or merely moral character, which they did not ascribe to it in matters properly spiritual, — in actions directed immediately to God and the salvation of their souls, as considered in relation to the requirements of the divine law, — a fact which throws some light upon their general views on the subject of liberty and necessity. If the Council of Trent had intended to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers upon the subject of free-will precise and explicit, they would have adverted to this distinction, to which the Lutheran Reformers especially— whose statements were chiefly in their mind in the formation of the canons on this subject— attached much weight. At the same time, the distinction is not one of great importance in a theological point of view; and there is no necessity for determining it, — so far at least as concerns the precise kind or degree of power or freedom of will which man has in regard to things civil and moral,— in giving a summary of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject. Calvin did not regard this distinction as of any great importance in a theological point of view, though he held it to be true and real in itself, — maintaining, as Luther did, that man has a power and freedom of will in regard to merely intellectual, moral, and civil things, which he has not in regard to things properly spiritual; and, indeed, he has given a very full and striking description of what natural men can do in these respects, as contrasted with their impotence, helplessness, and inability in all matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. The Scripture does not tell us anything about the causes or principles that ordinarily regulate or determine men's general exercise of their natural power of volition. This must be ascertained from an examination of man himself, of his mental constitution, and ordinary mental processes. It is a question of philosophy, and not of theology, — a question which the Scripture leaves us at liberty to determine by its own natural and appropriate evidence, unless men, upon alleged philosophical grounds, should deny what Scripture plainly teaches, — viz., that God has foreseen and fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass; or that He is ever exercising a most wise, holy, and powerful providence over all His creatures and all their actions, and thereby executing His decrees; or that, to use the language of our Confession, "fallen man (i.e., man as he is) has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." I really do not know that

there is any particular theory or doctrine concerning the liberty or bondage of the human will, which philosophers may deduce upon philosophical grounds from an examination of men's mental constitution and processes, that can be proved to be, in itself or in its consequences, opposed to anything taught us in the word of God, and that is therefore upon scriptural and theological grounds to be rejected.

Although, however, the Council of Trent has thus abstained from giving any formal or explicit definition of what they mean by the freedom of will which they ascribe to fallen man, and which they said had been only weakened, and not destroyed, by the fall, —has given no deliverance as to its nature, grounds, or sphere of operations, —and in this way, perhaps, left room enough for the followers of Augustine, such as the Jansenists, remaining honestly in the communion of the Church of Rome (at least in the state of matters in which their doctrines were first promulgated, —for this state of the case has been greatly changed since by the decisions pronounced in the course of the Jansenist controversy), yet there are sufficiently plain proofs that the council intended to deny the great doctrine of the Reformers, —that fallen man has no freedom of will, no actual available capacity for anything spiritually good, —and to assert that he retained the' power of doing something that was really acceptable to God, and that' contributed in some way, by its goodness and excellence, to his reception of divine grace, and his ultimate salvation. Accordingly, Bellarmine lays down this as his first and leading position, in stating the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject: "Homo ante omnem gratiam, liberum habet arbitrium, non solum ad opera naturalia, et moralia, sed etiam ad opera pietatis, et supernaturalia," —a position which is just precisely what the Council of Trent ought to have put forth explicitly, if they had intended to bring out their own sentiments fully and honestly, and to decide this point in a fair and manly way, by following out the principles laid down. This has been the doctrine generally taught by Romish writers; and the deviations from it which we find among them, have been towards views still more Pelagian. Baius and Quesnel taught the same doctrine as the Reformers upon this point; and the church's condemnation of the doctrine, as taught by them, was much more explicit than anything we find in the Council of Trent. Baius taught, " Liberum arbitrium sine gratiae Dei adiutorio non nisi ad peccandum valet;" and

Quesnel, " Peccator non est liber nisi ad malum;" and by condemning these doctrines, the Church of Rome has become more clearly Pelagian than she could be proved to be from the decisions of the Council of Trent.

The Will Before and After the Fall

In considering the grounds on which the Protestant doctrine on this subject rests, chiefly with the view of explaining somewhat more fully what the doctrine really is, it is necessary to advert to the opinion entertained by the Reformers as to the freedom or liberty of will man possessed before he fell from the condition in which he was created; because the truth is, —and the Reformers were fully alive to this consideration, —that the fall produced so great a change in men's character and condition, that there is scarcely any question in that department of theological science, — which is now often called Anthropology, or a view of what Scripture teaches as to what man is, — which can be fully and correctly stated and explained without a reference to the difference that subsists between man fallen and man unfallen. Now, upon this point, it is certain that the Reformers in general held that man, before he fell, had a liberty or freedom of will which fallen man does not possess, —a freedom or liberty of will similar to that which Pelagians and Socinians usually ascribe to man as he is. And it is in full accordance with the theology of the Reformation, that our Confession of Faith, immediately after laying down the position, formerly quoted and explained, about the natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, and which it has retained amidst all changes, proceeds thus: "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it and, in like manner, in the Catechisms it is said, that " our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will," sinned and fell. I refer to this subject at present, chiefly for the purpose of pointing out that the fact of this doctrine having been held throws much light upon the general views maintained upon this whole subject by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards. They ascribed to man freedom or liberty of will, —full power to will and to do what was spiritually good before the fall, and denied it to him after he had fallen.

Now, this fact affords materials for some important conclusions as to the real nature of the necessity or bondage which they ascribed to the will of fallen man, and the grounds on which they rested their doctrine regarding it. The compilers of our standards believed, as the Reformers did, that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that, of course, He had fore-ordained the fall of Adam, which thus consequently became in a certain sense necessary— necessary, by what was called the necessity of events, or the necessity of immutability. Still, they also believed that man fell, because he was left to the freedom of his own will, and because, having free-will, he freely willed or chose to sin. It follows from their holding at once both these doctrines, that they did not regard God's fore-ordination of the event as inconsistent with man's liberty of will; and, of course, they did not, and could not, regard the bondage which they ascribed specially to the will of fallen man as in any way, or to any extent, proceeding from, or caused by, God's decrees with respect to their actions. They believed, further, that God's providence, executing His decrees, was concerned in the fall of Adam, in the same sense, and to the same extent, to which it is concerned in the sinful actions which men perform now; but neither did they regard this as taking away his liberty, and neither of course did they consider the entire subjection of the will of fallen man to sin, or the actual sins which he commits, as the effect or result of that providence which God constantly exercises over all His creatures and all their actions. They believed, —and there is, indeed, no reason to doubt, —that the general laws which regulate men's mental processes, —which determine, for instance, the connection (invariable and necessary, or otherwise) between the conclusions of the judgment and the acts of volition, —operate now as they did before the fall, because the general framework of man's mental constitution remains unchanged, and because all the departments of his intellectual and moral constitution are equally vitiated, so far as spiritual things are concerned, according to their respective natures and functions, by the introduction of depravity. But the operation of these laws, whatever they may be, did not deprive man, unfallen, of his freedom or liberty of will, and of course it is not the cause of the bondage or servitude to which his will is now subjected. Man, according to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, before he fell had freedom or liberty of will, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, and notwithstanding any laws, whatever

these may be, which God had impressed upon his mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes. He no longer has this freedom or liberty of will, but, on the contrary, his will is in bondage or subjection to sin; so that, in point of fact, he can only will or choose what is sinful, and not what is spiritually good. The inference is unavoidable, that, according to this scheme of doctrine, the necessity, or bondage to sin, which now attaches to the human will, is a property of man, not simply as a creature, but as a fallen creature, — not springing from his mere relation to God, as the fore-ordainer of all things, and the actual ruler and governor of the world, nor from the mere operation of laws which God has impressed upon the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution, but from a cause distinct from all these— from something superinduced upon his character and condition by the fall.

The decree of God, fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass— the providence which He is ever exercising over all His creatures and all their actions— the laws which He has impressed upon man's mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes, —may indeed produce or imply some sort of necessity or bondage as attaching to the human will— may be inconsistent with freedom or liberty of will in the sense in which it is often ascribed to men, and I have no doubt this can be shown to be the case; but if it be true, as our standards plainly teach, that, all these things being the same, man once had a freedom or liberty of will which he has not now, it follows that there does now attach to men a necessity or bondage which is not directly dependent upon these causes, as to its actual existence and operation, and which, therefore, may be proved, by its own direct appropriate evidence, to exist and to operate, without requiring the proof or the assumption of any of these doctrines as a necessary medium of probation, and though it could not be shown to follow from them in the way of inference or conclusion. My object in making these observations is not to give any opinion upon the arguments in support of necessity, as it is commonly understood, that may be deduced from fore-ordination, providence, and the laws that regulate men's mental processes, but merely to show that, according to the judgment of the Reformers, and of the compilers of our standards, there is a necessity or bondage attaching to the will of man as fallen, which is not involved in, or deducible from, these doctrines, and does not

necessarily require a previous proof of them, or of any of them, in order to its being sufficiently established. The only necessity or bondage taught by the Reformers and by the standards of our church as a scriptural doctrine, is that which attaches to man as fallen, and is traceable to the depravity which the fall introduced, as its source or cause. And it is important, I think, that this doctrine should be viewed by itself, in its own place, in its native independence, and in connection with its own distinct and appropriate evidence. The Reformers and the compilers of our standards did not see any other kind or species of necessity or bondage to be taught in Scripture, and did not regard the assertion of any other as necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of evangelical truth. The question, whether liberty of will, in the common sense, is shut out, and necessity established, by a survey of the laws that regulate our mental processes, is a question in philosophy and not in theology, and it is one on which I cannot say that I have formed a very decided opinion. I am inclined, upon the whole, to think that liberty of will, as that phrase is commonly employed, can be disproved, and that necessity can be established upon metaphysical or philosophical grounds; but I do not consider myself called upon to maintain either side of this question by anything contained in Scripture or the standards of our church; and I rejoice to think that, upon the grounds which I have endeavoured to explain, the doctrine of the utter bondage of the will of fallen man, in reference to anything spiritually good, because of depravity, is not dependent for its evidence upon the settlement of any merely philosophical question.

With respect to the bearing of the fore-ordination and providence of God upon the question of the liberty or bondage of the will, —or, what is virtually the same thing, with respect to the liberty or bondage of the will of man, viewed, not as fallen and depraved, but simply as a creature entirely dependent upon God, and directed and governed by Him according to His good pleasure, —the word of God and the standards of our church say nothing beyond this, — that man before his fall, or viewed simply as a creature, had, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, a freedom and power to will and to do good, which fallen man has not. The Reformers, while all strenuously maintaining the utter bondage of the will of fallen man as a scriptural truth, usually declined to

speculate upon the bearing of God's fore-ordination and providence upon the freedom of the will of His creatures, simply as such, or, what is the same thing, of man before the fall, as a subject mysterious and incomprehensible in its own nature, —one on which scarcely any definite information was given us in Scripture, and one the settlement of which was not necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of gospel truth; and Calvin, in particular, who never made such strong statements as Luther and Melanchthon did in their earlier works, about the connection between fore-ordination and necessity, has, with his usual caution and wisdom, set forth these views upon many occasions.

This practice of distinguishing between the freedom of man's will in his unfallen and in his fallen condition was not introduced by the Reformers. The distinction had been fully brought out and applied by Augustine. It had a place in the speculations of the schoolmen. Peter Lombard, in his four Books of Sentences, the text-book of the Scholastic Theology, distinguishes and explains the freedom of man's will in his four-fold state, —viz., before the fall; after the fall, but before regeneration; after regeneration in this life; and, lastly, after the resurrection in heaven. The subject is explained in these same aspects in the Formula Concordiae of the Lutheran Church very much as it is in our own Confession of Faith. This view of the matter is also usually taken in the works of the great theologians of the seventeenth century. But in more modern times the tendency has rather been to consider the whole subject of the freedom of the will as one great general topic of investigation, and to examine it chiefly upon philosophical grounds, without much attention, comparatively, to its theological relations, and to the distinctions and divisions which the generally admitted doctrines of theology required to be introduced into it. In this way, we think that the respective provinces of the philosopher and the theologian have been somewhat confounded, to the injury, probably, of both parties; a good deal of confusion has been introduced into the whole subject, and an impression has been created, that the maintenance of some of the most important of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system is much more intimately connected with, and much more entirely dependent upon, the establishment of certain philosophical theories, than an accurate and comprehensive view of the whole subject would warrant. A very general impression prevails,

first, that the doctrine of the liberty of the will, as implying what is commonly called a liberty of indifference, and the self-determining power of the will, is an essential part of the Arminian system of theology, —i.e., that, on the one hand, Arminianism requires it as a part of the position which it must occupy, —and that, on the other hand, the proof or admission of it establishes Arminianism; and, secondly, that an exactly similar relation subsists between the doctrine of philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology. There may be some foundation for this impression, in so far as Arminianism is concerned, though upon the consideration of this point I do not mean to enter. What I wish to notice is, that whether the impression be just or not, in so far as concerns liberty and Arminianism, I do not regard it as well founded, in so far as philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology are concerned, and that I reckon this an important advantage to Calvinism in an argumentative point of view.

The doctrine of philosophical necessity is a certain theory or opinion as to the principles that regulate the exercise of the will of man as a faculty of his nature, and that determine the production of men's volitions, and their consequent actions. The theory is usually founded partly upon an examination of our mental processes themselves in the light of consciousness, —certainly the most direct and legitimate source of evidence upon the subject, — and partly upon certain deductions from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in their supposed bearing upon the volitions and actions of men. This latter department of topics, and the proofs they afford, may be contemplated either in the light of revelation or of natural religion, —which also suggests some information regarding them; and, accordingly, the doctrine of philosophical necessity, in the same sense in which it has been maintained by many Calvinistic divines, has been very ably defended upon both these grounds, by men who did not believe in the authority of revelation, —such as Hobbes and Collins. It is, however, only the first class of proofs that can really establish the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as usually understood, —i.e., as it is opposed to liberty of indifference and the self-determining power of the will; for although conclusive arguments may be deduced from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in favour of the necessity of volitions

and actions, —i.e., in favour of the certainty of their being just what they are, and of the improbability in some sense of their being other than they are, —yet no conclusion can be validly deduced from this source as to the immediate or approximate cause of our volitions, or the precise provision made in our mental constitution, and in the laws that regulate our mental processes, for effecting the result, though foreseen and foreordained, and therefore in itself certain; unless, indeed, it be contended that it is impossible for God certainly to foresee and certainly to order the volitions and actions of men without having established those very laws for the regulation of their mental processes, and especially for the determination of their volitions, which the doctrine of philosophical necessity involves; and this is a position which, from the nature of the case, it is scarcely possible to establish. There can seldom be a very secure ground for deduction or inference, — when it is needful, with that view, to take up the position, that God could not have accomplished His purpose, or effected a particular result with certainty, except only in one way, and by some one specified provision. Even then, though it could be proved or rendered probable on merely psychological or metaphysical grounds, that the doctrine of philosophical necessity is unfounded, and that, on the contrary, man has a liberty of indifference, and his will a self-determining power, we would not regard ourselves as constrained to abandon the Calvinistic doctrines concerning the predestination and providence of God, inasmuch as, leaving every other consideration out of view, these doctrines could merely prove that the certainty of the event or result is in some way provided for and secured, and would not afford any adequate grounds for the conclusion that God could not have accomplished this in the case of a class of rational and responsible beings, who were mentally constituted in accordance with the libertarian view of the laws that regulate their mental processes, and determine their volitions. If the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as opposed to a liberty of indifference and a self-determining power in the will, can be established by the direct evidence appropriately applicable to it as a psychological question, —as I am inclined to think it can, —then this affords a strong confirmation of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and providence: for, on the assumption of the truth of this philosophical position, inferences may be deduced from it in support of these theological doctrines which it does not seem practicable to evade, except by taking refuge in atheism; but,

upon the ground which has been stated, it does not seem to me to follow, e converso, that if this philosophical position is disproved, the theological doctrines must in consequence be abandoned. And if this view be a sound one, it certainly tends to illustrate the firmness of the foundation on which the Calvinistic argument rests.

But it is not my intention to discuss this subject; and I must return to the topic which has suggested these observations, —viz., that the Reformers and the older Calvinistic divines ascribed to man before his fall a freedom or liberty of will which they denied to man as he is, and that the only necessity or bondage which they ascribed to man as he is, was an inability to will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, as a result or consequence simply of the entire depravity of his moral nature, —i.e., of his actual dispositions and tendencies. This was the only necessity they advocated as having anything like direct and explicit sanction from Scripture, or as indispensably necessary to the exposition and defence of their system of theology, —not a necessity deduced from anything in God's purposes and providence, or from anything in men's mental constitution applicable to men, as men, or simply as creatures, but from a special feature in men's character as fallen and depraved. This necessity or bondage under which they held man fallen, as distinguished from man unfallen, to be, resolved itself into the entire absence in fallen man of holy and good dispositions or tendencies, and the prevalence in his moral nature of what is ungodly and depraved; and thus stood entirely distinct from, and independent of, those wider and more general considerations, whether philosophical or theological, applicable to man as man, having a certain mental constitution, or as a dependent creature and subject of God, on the ground of which the controversy about liberty and necessity has been of late commonly conducted.

I have said that, in modern times, this distinction between the case of man before and after his fall has been too much neglected by theologians, even by those who admitted the distinction, and would have defended it if they had been led to discuss it. It has been too much absorbed or thrown into the background, and kept out of view by the more general subject of liberty and necessity, in the form in which it has been commonly treated. This result, I think, has been injurious, and unfavourable to the interests

of sound doctrine.

The Bondage of the Will

We proceed now more directly, though very briefly, to explain the great doctrine, taught by all the Reformers and condemned by the Council of Trent, with respect to man's want of free-will, or the utter bondage or servitude of the will of fallen man to sin because of depravity; and after the explanations already given of the relation of this doctrine to other topics, we shall not consider it needful to do more than advert to the grounds on which it has been advocated, and to those on which it has been opposed. Having had occasion to quote and comment upon the first two propositions in the ninth chapter of our Confession of Faith, which treats of free-will, —setting forth, first, the natural liberty with which God hath endowed the will of man, and which it retains, and must retain, in all circumstances; and, secondly, the full freedom and power which man in his state of innocency had to do God's will, —we shall continue to follow its guidance, because it exhibits upon this, as upon most other topics, a more precise and accurate statement of the leading doctrines taught in Scripture and promulgated by the Reformers, than any other production with which we are acquainted. The doctrine in question is thus stated in our Confession: " Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

If man, in his natural state, cannot do anything spiritually good, the cause, the sole proximate cause of this is, that he does not will to do it, because by universal admission man has the power (of course within a certain range, since he is not omnipotent) to do what he wills to do. And if no man in his natural condition has ever in fact done, or willed to do, anything spiritually good, the inference is well warranted, that men are not naturally able to will what is good; for had such an ability existed, it would certainly have been more or less put forth in act by some men.

Besides the connection thus plainly subsisting between the more general doctrine of the entire corruption of man's moral nature, and his inability to will what is spiritually good, there are some of the scriptural descriptions of man's natural character and condition which bear more directly and immediately upon this specific topic, —such as those which represent natural men as the servants or slaves of sin, as led captive by Satan at his will, —while it is certain that Satan exerts no external compulsion upon them; and especially those which describe them as dead in sin, and blind and darkened in their minds. "We cannot dwell upon these passages, and we need not repeat the cautions, necessary to be observed in treating of original sin, against either passively and carelessly forming only a very vague and indefinite conception of their import, or actively and zealously explaining them away, departing from what they naturally and obviously mean or imply, without a clear scriptural warrant enforcing the necessity of the deviation, and pointing out the extent to which it is to be carried.

If man, in his natural state, without divine grace, cannot turn from sin unto God, or prepare himself for turning, this must arise wholly from his inability to will to do it; for there is no external obstacle to his turning to God, or doing anything spiritually good. If he does not turn from sin to God, it is because he does not will to turn; and if he cannot turn, it is because he has no ability to will to turn. He is just as able to turn to God, and to will to turn to God, as he is to do, or to will to do, any other thing that is spiritually good; for there is certainly no peculiar obstacle, external or internal, in the way of men turning from sin unto God, that does not equally stand in the way of their doing anything else which He requires, or which is pleasing and acceptable to Him. If, then, natural men cannot by their own strength turn to God, they have no ability of will to anything spiritually good. Now, we have very solemn and explicit declarations of our Saviour, that no man is able to come to Him (which is virtually identical, or inseparably connected, with turning from sin unto God), except it be given him of the Father— except the Father draw him; i.e., — as can be easily and fully proved from Scripture, —unless and until he become the subject of the omnipotent gracious agency of the Holy Spirit. And, besides, the general descriptions given us in Scripture of the change which is effected, —of the result which is produced when any man does

come to Christ or turn to God, —are manifestly fitted and intended to convey to us the idea that man, by the exercise of his own natural power of volition, did not, and could not, do anything to commence it, or set the process in operation. I refer, of course, more especially to those passages where this process is not only ascribed wholly to God's agency, but where it is more specifically described as an opening of the eyes of the blind— a creation— the creation of a new heart— a new birth— a resurrection from the dead. Unless these statements are to be wholly explained away, and perverted from their natural and obvious meaning, —and this can be done legitimately only when it is proved that Scripture itself warrants and requires it, —they must be regarded as teaching us that, in the originating of the process of turning to God, men's own natural power of volition can exert no real influence, no proper efficiency; and if so, that, upon the grounds already explained, he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation. Whatever proves, in general, that man in his fallen condition has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, proves equally, in particular, that he cannot will to turn to God; while anything which proves that men by their own strength are unable to will to come to Christ or to turn to God, not only directly establishes the great practical conclusion which gives to the general doctrine of man's inability to will what is good its chief importance, but, by the process of thought already explained, establishes that general doctrine itself: and by the application of these obvious considerations, the doctrine of man's inability in his natural state to will anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, may be shown to be supported by an extensive range of scriptural statements, as well as by the analogy of faith, —by its indissoluble connection with other important scriptural doctrines.

Bondage of the Will— Objections

With respect to the objections to this doctrine of fallen man's inability to will anything spiritually good or to turn to God, or the grounds and reasons on which it is opposed by Romanists and others, the first and most important consideration to be attended to is this — that it is not

alleged that there is any specific statement in Scripture which directly opposes or contradicts it; i.e., it is not alleged that any statement can be produced from the word of God which directly, or by anything like plain implication, tells us that fallen man has any ability of will to anything spiritually good, or is able by his own strength to turn to God, or to prepare himself thereunto. The objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the Reformers, and of our standards, upon this subject, are not inferences or deductions from specific statements of Scripture, alleged to bear immediately upon the point in dispute, but only inferences or deductions from certain general principles which Scripture is alleged to sanction. And there is an important difference, in point of certainty, between these two classes of inferences or deductions. The objections to the doctrine of fallen man's inability may be said, to be all ultimately resolvable into this one general position, that in Scripture commands and exhortations are addressed to men, requiring them to abstain from sin and to turn to God; that they are responsible for rendering obedience to these commands, and incur guilt by disobeying them; and that these commands would not have been issued, that this responsibility would not attach to them, and that this guilt could not be incurred, unless they were able to will and to do the things commanded. Now, it is obvious that this whole argument resolves, as to its sole real basis and foundation, not into anything which is actually stated in Scripture, directly or by implication, but into certain notions with respect to the reasons why God issued these commands or exhortations, —the grounds on which alone moral responsibility can rest; subjects, both of which are in their very nature profound and mysterious, which do not lie very fully within the range or cognisance of our faculties, and with respect to which men are certainly not entitled to pronounce dogmatically through the mere application of their own powers of reasoning, and unless guided plainly and distinctly by the Scriptures themselves.

The argument or objection, though in reality one, may be said to resolve itself into these two positions: First, God would not, or rather could not, have addressed such commands or exhortations to men unless they were able to obey them; and the reason commonly assigned is, that it could at least serve no good purpose to issue commands to men to which they were unable to render obedience; and, secondly, an ability to do, and of

course to will to do, what is commanded, is necessary in order that men may incur responsibility and guilt by not doing it. Now, it is admitted that God commands fallen men— men as they are— to do what is spiritually good, and to turn unto Himself, and that they are responsible, or incur guilt, by not doing what is thus commanded; and this being universally admitted as clear and certain from Scripture, the question is, How are the inferences or conclusions of the objectors to be met? This subject has been most abundantly discussed in every age, and leads into the examination of some questions which never have been solved, and never will be solved in man's present condition. I can make only a few remarks upon it, rather in the way of indicating where the answers to the objections lie, than of expounding or developing them. Let it be remembered, then, what is the true state or condition of the argument. There has been produced from Scripture what seems to be very strong and conclusive evidence that fallen man has wholly lost, and does not now possess, any ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, —evidence which cannot be directly answered or disposed of, and which is not contradicted by anything like direct evidence from Scripture in support of the opposite position; and the proper question is, Is there anything in the general reasonings of the objectors above stated, that is so clearly and certainly both true and relevant, as to warrant us, on that ground alone, —for there is no other, — summarily to reject this evidence, or to resolve at all hazards to explain it away?

With respect to the first and less important of the two positions into which it has been shown that the argument of the objectors resolves itself, —viz., that God could not, or would not, have issued such commands and exhortations, unless men had been able to obey them, —it is, obviously enough, unwarranted and presumptuous in its general character and complexion, as it assumes that men are capable of judging of the reasons, nay, of all the reasons, that could or should regulate the divine procedure. This general and radical defect is quite sufficient to deprive the argument founded upon it of all such certain and concluding power or cogency, as to make it adequate to overturn or neutralize the strength of the direct scriptural evidence on which the doctrine of man's inability rests. We are entitled to set aside this objection as unsatisfactory and insufficient,

simply upon the ground that, for aught the objectors know or can establish, God might have had good and sufficient reasons for addressing such commands and exhortations to men, even though they were unable to obey them. The objector virtually asserts that God could have no good reasons for addressing such commands to men, unless they were able to obey them. We meet this with the counter assertion, that He might have sufficient reasons for addressing such commands to men, though they were unable to comply with them; and as, from the condition of the argument, as above explained, the onus probandi lies upon the objectors, our mere counter assertion is a conclusive bar to their progress and success, unless they can produce a positive proof in support of their position, or a positive disproof of ours.

But though we are entitled to stop here, and to hold the objection sufficiently disposed of in this way, we do not need to confine ourselves within the strict rules of logical requirement, and can adduce materials which bear much more directly upon the disposal of the objection; and especially we can show that there are indications given us in Scripture of reasons that explain to some extent why these commands and exhortations were addressed to men, though they were unable to obey them. This subject is fully discussed and illustrated in Luther's great work, "De Servo Arbitrio" in reply to Erasmus, which is, perhaps, upon the whole, the finest specimen he has left of his talents as a theologian, and which is thoroughly Calvinistic in its doctrinal views. It is discussed by Calvin himself in the fifth chapter of the second book of his Institutes, and in his treatise on Free-will; and there is a brief but very able summary of the views generally held by Calvinists on this topic in Turretine.

The commands and exhortations addressed to men by God in Scripture, in reference to things spiritual, may be divided into two classes: First, those which are directly comprehended under the original moral law, and obligatory upon men, simply as rational and responsible creatures, and which are summed up in the duty of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; and, secondly, those which have reference more immediately to the remedial scheme of grace revealed to men for their salvation, such as repentance or conversion— turning from sin unto

God— faith in Christ Jesus, and thereafter progressive holiness. These two classes of obligations might, for brevity's sake, be considered as comprehended in, or indicated by, the two great duties of love to God and faith in Christ. That these things are imposed upon men by being expressly commanded by God in His word, —that men are responsible for doing them, and incur guilt by not doing them, —is unquestionable; while yet we allege that men in their natural condition are unable to do them, because unable to will to do them. We are not, however, at present considering them in connection with the general subjects of responsibility and its grounds, —to that we shall afterwards advert more fully, —but only in connection with the more limited objection that there could be no ground for imposing such commands unless men were able to obey them. After the explanations which have already been given, we have now simply to consider whether we can discover or imagine any reasonable grounds why these commands might be imposed upon fallen men, notwithstanding their inability to comply with them.

In regard to the first class, —those directly comprehended in the original moral law, and summed up in supreme love to God, — there is no difficulty in seeing the reasons why God might address such commands to fallen and depraved men. The moral law is a transcript of God's moral perfections, and must ever continue unchangeable. It must always be binding, in all its extent, upon all rational and responsible creatures, from the very condition of their existence, from their necessary relation to God. It constitutes the only accurate representation of the duty universally and at all times incumbent upon rational beings— the duty which God must of necessity impose upon and require of them. Man was able to obey this law, to discharge this whole duty, in the condition in which he was created. If he is now in a different condition, — one in which he is no longer able to discharge this duty, —this does not remove or invalidate his obligation to perform it; it does not affect the reasonableness and propriety of God, on the ground of His own perfections, and of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, proclaiming and imposing this obligation — requiring of men to do what is still as much as ever incumbent upon them. On these grounds, there is no difficulty in seeing that there are reasons— and this is the only point we have at present to do with— why God might, or rather would, continue to require of men to

love Him with, all their heart, even although they were no longer able to comply with this requirement. It was right and expedient that men should still have the moral law, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, enforced upon them, as a means of knowledge and a means of conviction, even though it was no longer directly available as an actual standard which they were in fact able to comply with. Notwithstanding our inability to render obedience to it, it is still available and useful as a means of knowledge, —as affording us materials of knowing God's character, and the relation in which we stand to Him, and the duty which He requires and must require of us. It is available and useful also, —nay, necessary, —as a means of conviction— conviction of our sin and of our inability. If men are sinners, it is important that they should be aware of this. The only process which is directly fitted in its own nature to effect this, is stating and enforcing duty, —calling upon men to do what is incumbent upon them, —and then pointing out where and how far they come short. If men are really unable to discharge the duties incumbent upon them, it is important that they should be aware of this feature in their condition; and the only means of securing this, in accordance with the principles of their constitution as rational beings, is by requiring of them to do what is obligatory upon them.

It is quite unreasonable, then, to assume, or lay down as a principle, that the only consideration which justifies or explains the imposition of a command is, that men may obey it, as implying that they can obey it, since it is plain enough that there are reasons which may warrant or require the imposition of a command, even when men cannot obey it; and that good may result from the imposition of it, even in these circumstances. The objection which we are considering, assumes that when God addresses a command to men, He thereby, by the mere fact of issuing the command, tells them that they are able to obey it; but we have said enough, we think, to show not only that a statement to this effect is not necessarily implied in the issuing of the command, but that it is quite possible, at least, that the very object of issuing the command may be to teach and to impress a position precisely the reverse of this, —viz., that they are not able to obey it. There is nothing unreasonable or improbable in this, and therefore the assumption of the certain truth of the opposite position affords no sufficient ground for setting aside the strong

scriptural evidence we can adduce to prove that this is indeed the actual state of the case, —and that one object which God has in view in requiring of fallen men the performance of the whole duty which is incumbent upon them, is just to convince them that they cannot discharge it in their own strength, or without the assistance of His special grace, without the supernatural agency of His own Spirit.

With respect to the other class of spiritual duties required of men in Scripture, those which have more immediate reference to the remedial scheme of grace, —viz., repentance and faith, —there are some points in which they differ from those directly comprehended under the original moral law; but these points of difference are not such as materially to affect our present argument. It is true, indeed, that God was not bound in the same sense, and on the same grounds, to impose, or to continue the imposition of these duties; and that men were not originally, and by the mere condition of their existence, subject to an obligation to obey them. They originate, as to their existence and obligation, in the gracious scheme which God has devised and executed for the salvation of lost man; and in the provision which He, in His sovereignty and wisdom, has made for bestowing upon men individually an interest in the benefits of that salvation. But this difference does not affect the point now under consideration. The same general views which we have stated in regard to the former class of duties, apply also to this— to the effect of showing that God might possibly, and even probably, have good and sufficient reasons for imposing upon men commands which they were not able to obey; and that the imposition of the command, so far from implying necessarily that men have power to obey it, might just be intended to teach them the reverse of this. That men are not able to repent and believe by their own strength, without the special grace of God, is generally admitted, both by Papists and Arminians, who are accustomed to press this objection. If this be so, then it is important that men should be aware of it; that they may realize their own helplessness and dependence, and may thus be led to seek that grace of God of which they stand in need; and, in accordance with a favourite saying of Augustine's quoted with approbation by Calvin, "Jubet Deus quae non possumus, ut noverimus quid ab ipso petere debeamus." It is in entire accordance with the great principles which obviously regulate God's moral administration, His communication of

spiritual blessings, that He should have regard to the production of this result in the commands which He imposes. And, with respect to this class of duties, there is another consideration which tends towards an explanation of the imposition of the command, in accordance with men's assumed inability to obey it, —viz., that we have good ground in Scripture to believe that it is a part of God's wise and gracious provision to make the imposition of the command, and the felt inability to comply with it, the occasion, and in some sense the means, of His communicating to men strength to enable them to comply with it; so that He may be said to issue the command to repent and believe, not because men are already and previously able to obey, but in order that, having convinced them of their inability, He may then, in the wisest and most beneficial manner, impart to them the grace and strength, that are necessary to enable them to obey. This principle has been often illustrated, and very pertinently, by a reference to some of our Saviour's miracles, —as, for example, when He commanded a lame man, to walk, which he was at the time wholly unable to do, but when, at the same time, in connection with the command, and in a sense through its instrumentality, He communicated a power or strength that made him able to comply with it.

On these grounds it is easy enough to dispose of the objection against the doctrine of man's inability in his natural condition, and without divine grace, to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, founded upon the fact that God commands and requires these things. These considerations, however, though quite sufficient to dispose of this objection, do not go to the root of the difficulty connected with this subject; for the great difficulty lies not in the mere fact that such commands and exhortations are addressed to men while they are unable to obey them (and this is all that we have yet examined), but in the fact that they are responsible for obeying, and incur guilt by disobeying, notwithstanding their inability to render, because of their inability to will to render, obedience. This is the great difficulty, and we must now proceed to consider it; but as the objection is often put in the form of an allegation, that God would not, and could not, impose such commands unless men were able to comply with them, —it being assumed that the mere fact of the issue of the command implies that men are able to render obedience to it, —we have thought proper to advert, in the first place, to

the objection in this form, and to suggest briefly the very obvious considerations by which it can be conclusively shown to be destitute of all real weight and cogency.

The great objection commonly adduced against everything like necessity or bondage, when ascribed to man or to his will, is, that this is inconsistent with man being responsible for his actions, and incurring guilt by his sins and shortcomings. That man is responsible for his actions, —that he incurs guilt, and justly subjects himself to punishment, by his transgressions of God's law, —is universally admitted, on the testimony at once of Scripture and consciousness. Of course, no doctrine is to be received as true, which is inconsistent with this great truth. It has been often alleged of certain doctrines, both theological and philosophical, that, if true, they would subvert men's responsibility for their actions; and on no subject, perhaps, has there been a larger amount of intricate and perplexing discussion than has been brought forward in the attempt to settle generally and abstractly what are the elements that constitute, and are necessary to, the responsibility of rational beings, and to apply the principles so settled, or supposed to be settled, to a variety of positions predicated of men, viewed either by themselves or in their relation to God, which have been affirmed or denied, respectively, to be consistent with their being responsible for their actions.

We have no great fear of men being ever led in great numbers to deny their responsibility, or practically to shake off a sense of their being responsible for their actions, because, or through means, of any speculative opinions which they may have been led to adopt. The Author of man's constitution has made such effectual provision for men feeling that they are responsible, that there is not much danger that this conviction will ever be very extensively eradicated by mere speculations. When men have been led to deny their responsibility, and seem to have escaped from any practical sense of it, this has been usually traceable, not to speculation, but to the brutalizing influence of gross immorality—though sometimes speculation has been brought in to defend, or palliate, what it did not produce. On this ground we have no great sympathy with the extreme anxiety manifested by some to shut out, or explain away, all doctrines with regard to which it may be alleged with some plausibility

that they are inconsistent with responsibility.

Of course, each case in which this allegation is made must be tried and decided upon its own proper merits; but a proneness to have recourse to objections against doctrines propounded, derived from this source, is, we think, more likely, upon the whole, to lead to the rejection than to the reception of what is true, and can be satisfactorily established by its own appropriate evidence. And when a controversy arises between men of intelligence and good character, as to whether certain opinions maintained by the one party, and denied by the other, are or are not consistent with human responsibility, we think there is a pretty strong presumption, in the mere fact that the point is controverted between such men, that the opinions in question are not inconsistent with responsibility. It may, indeed, be alleged, that the men who hold these opinions, and maintain their innocency, are better than their principles, —that they do not really believe them and follow them out to their practical consequences; but this is a very forced and improbable allegation, —and if the opinions in question have prevailed long and widely, it is altogether unwarrantable.

Upon the ground of these general and obvious considerations, we are inclined to think that Calvinists need not give themselves very much concern about the allegations which have been so often and so confidently made, that their doctrines are inconsistent with men's responsibility, and should be chiefly occupied with the investigation and the exposition of the direct and proper evidence by which their doctrines may be proved to be true. Still, objections that have a plausible appearance cannot be altogether disregarded; and it is necessary that men who would hold their views intelligently, should have some definite conception of the mode, whether it be more general or more special, in which objections should be disposed of. We shall therefore make a few observations on the great difficulty of the alleged incompatibility of the doctrine of the inability of fallen man to will anything spiritually good, with responsibility and guilt, without attempting to give anything like a full discussion of it; and especially without pretending to investigate the general subject of the constituents, grounds, and necessary conditions of moral responsibility, — a subject which belongs rather to the province of

the philosopher than the theologian.

It seems very like an irresistible dictate of common sense, not only that there are influences that might be brought to bear upon men, which would deprive them altogether, and in every sense, of their character of free agents, and that, consequently, there may be necessities which would be inconsistent with responsibility and guilt; but also, moreover, that men cannot be justly held guilty, and of course liable to punishment, for not doing what they are unable, in any sense or respect, to will or to do. And, accordingly, the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability have usually admitted that there is, and must be, some sense or respect in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what is required of him. They have then tried to show how or in what sense it is that man may be said to be able to do what is required of him; while it may also be true, in a different sense, though not inconsistent with this, that he is unable to do it; and then they have further undertaken to show, that the ability which they can concede to man, consistently with the inability which they also ascribe to him, is a sufficient ground for responsibility and guilt; or, at least, —and this is certainly all that is argumentatively incumbent upon them, —that it cannot be proved that it is not. This, I think, may be said to be a correct and compendious description of the general outline of the course of argument usually employed by the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability, in answer to the objection which we are now considering about its alleged incompatibility with responsibility. This mode of dealing with the objection is, in its general scope and character, a perfectly fair and legitimate one; and if the different positions of which it may be said to consist can be established, it is sufficient fully to dispose of it. For the whole case stands thus.

The sacred Scriptures teach, very plainly and explicitly, that fallen men in their natural condition, and before they become the subjects of God's regenerating grace, are unable to will or to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation; while they teach, also, that they incur guilt, and expose themselves to punishment, by not willing and doing what God requires of them. And as common sense seems to dictate that men cannot incur guilt, unless they are in some sense or respect able to will and to do what is demanded of them, the very obvious difficulty on which the

objection is founded at once arises. In these circumstances, —this being the state of the case, —these being the actual realities with which we have to deal, —the very first question that would, naturally suggest itself to a man of real candour, anxious only about the discovery of truth, —about really ascertaining what it was his duty to believe upon the subject (I speak, of course, of men admitting the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures), —would be this: Is there any way in which these two doctrines can be reconciled; or in which, at least, it can be shown that they cannot be proved to be irreconcilable, or necessarily exclusive of each other? Is there any sense in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what God requires of him, which can be shown to be consistent with what Scripture seems so plainly to teach as to his inability, or which at least cannot be proved to be inconsistent with it, and which, moreover, may also be shown to be sufficient as a basis or foundation for his responsibility and guilt, —or, at least, cannot be shown to be insufficient for this conclusion? These are the questions which would naturally and at once suggest themselves to any fair and candid man in the actual circumstances of the case. And if so, then it is plain that an attempt to answer them, and to answer them in the affirmative, is entitled to a fair and impartial examination. Any attempt that may be made to answer these questions, must in fairness be carefully considered, conclusively disposed of, and proved to be unsatisfactory, before we can be warranted in rejecting the doctrine of man's inability, —which the Scripture seems so plainly to teach, — and even before any violent effort can be warrantably made, — and a very violent one is certainly required, —to explain away the natural and obvious meaning of the declarations which it makes upon this subject. I have no doubt that these questions have been answered satisfactorily, so far as can be shown to be necessary, by the defenders of the, doctrine of man's inability to will anything spiritually good; and I think it could be shown that any errors into which they may have fallen in the discussion of this subject, or any want of success in the mode in which any of them may have conducted their argument, have usually arisen from their attempting more in the way of explanation and proof, than the conditions of the argument, as they have now been stated, required them to undertake.

From the explanations which we have given upon this subject, it is

evident that the examination of the objection is narrowed very much to this question: Is there any sense, and if so, what, in which men may be said to be able to do what is spiritually good, and with respect to which it cannot be proved, either, first, that it is inconsistent with the inability which the Scripture so plainly ascribes to him; or, secondly, that it is insufficient as a basis or foundation for responsibility and guilt? or, — what would be equally satisfactory in point of argument, — can anything answering this description be predicated of man, which, in so far as the matter of responsibility and guilt is concerned, is equivalent to an assertion of his responsibility. Now, it has been very common for the defenders of the Scripture doctrine upon this subject, to base their arguments, in reply to the objection about responsibility, upon the distinction between natural and moral inability, —alleging that man, though morally unable to do what God requires, has a natural ability to do it, and is on this ground responsible for not doing it. Natural inability is described as that which directly results from, or is immediately produced by, some physical law, or some superior controlling power, or some external violence, —any of which, it is of course admitted, deprives men of their responsibility, and exempts them from guilt; and, where none of these causes operate, men are said to possess natural ability. Moral inability is usually described as that which arises solely from want of will to do the thing required, from the opposition of will or want of inclination as the cause or source of the thing required not being done, — there not being in the way any external or natural obstacle of the kind just described. In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, men may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do a thing, if their actual or de facto inability to do it arises solely from their want of will to do it, —so that it might be said of them, that they could do it, or were able to do it, if they willed or chose to do it. And to apply this to the subject before us: In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, it is contended that man may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, because there is no physical law, no superior controlling power, no external violence, operating irrespectively of his own volition, that prevents him from doing it, or is the cause of his inability to do it, if he has any; while he may also, at the same time, be said to be morally unable to do God's will; because, while there is an

inability de facto, —i.e., according to the views of those who are conducting this argument in answer to the objection, —the cause of this lies wholly in his will— i.e., in his want of will— to do it, —in his not choosing to do it. In this way there is set forth a sense in which man may be said to be able to do what is required of him, as well as a sense in which he is unable to do it, —he is naturally able, but morally unable; and if these two things cannot be shown to be inconsistent with each other, and if natural ability, or the absence of natural inability, cannot be shown to be insufficient as a ground for responsibility, then the objection is wholly removed.

Now, I have no doubt that this distinction between natural and moral inability is a real and actual, and not merely a verbal or arbitrary one, and that it has an important bearing upon the subject of man's responsibility, and on the discussions which have taken place regarding it; but I am not quite satisfied that, taken by itself it goes to the root of the matter, so as to explain the whole difficulty. The distinction is undoubtedly a real one, for there is a manifest difference between the condition of a man who is subjected to external force or coercion, —whereby his volitions are prevented from taking effect, or he is compelled to do what he is decidedly averse to, —and that of a man who is left free to do whatever he wills or chooses to do. The distinction, thus real in itself or in its own nature, is realized in the actual condition of man. It is admitted by those who most strenuously maintain man's inability, that there is no physical law operating like those regulating the material world, which imposes upon men any necessity of sinning, or produces any inability to do God's will, or to turn from sin, and that there is no superior controlling power or external violence brought to bear directly either upon men's power of volition, or upon the connection between their volitions and their actions. What man ordinarily does he does voluntarily or spontaneously, in the uncontrolled exercise of his power of volition. No constraint or compulsion is exercised upon him. He does evil, because he chooses or wills to do evil; and the only direct and proximate cause of his doing evil in his natural condition— only evil, and that continually— is, that he wills or chooses to do so. Now, it may be fairly contended that a rational and intelligent being, who, without any compulsion or coercion external to himself, spontaneously chooses or wills evil, and who does evil solely

because he chooses or wills to do it, is responsible for the evil which he does, or, at least, cannot be easily shown to be irresponsible, whatever else may be predicated or proved concerning him.

This seems to be the sum and substance of all that is involved in, or that can be fairly brought out of, the common distinction between natural and moral ability or inability, as usually held by those who maintain the moral inability of man to do God's will and to turn from sin. This is the way in which they apply it, and this is the only and the whole application which they can make of it, with reference to this matter of responsibility. Now, this distinction, and the application thus made of it, are of great value and importance, when the subject is treated merely upon metaphysical principles, when the question is discussed as between liberty of will and what is usually called philosophical necessity; and, accordingly, the most valuable and important object accomplished in Edwards' great work on the freedom of the will, is, that he has proved that nothing more than natural ability— a power of doing as men will or choose— can be shown to be necessary to their responsibility, —that a moral as distinguished from a natural inability, attaching to them, does not exempt them from fault, inasmuch as this admits of its being said of them, that they could do what is required of them if they would. Valuable and important, however, as is the distinction thus applied in this department, I have some difficulties about receiving it as a complete solution of the objection under consideration, which has been adduced against the theological doctrine of man's inability as taught by the Reformers, and set forth in the standards of our church.

The difficulty is this, that the distinction, when applied to man's outward conduct or actions as distinguished from the inward motive or disposition, seems to apply only to man's inability to do God's will, and to leave untouched his inability to will to do it. It is important to show that man, in doing evil, as he does unceasingly until he is renewed by God's grace, acts spontaneously, without compulsion— does only what he wills or chooses to do; but if the doctrine which the Reformers and the compilers of our standards deduced from Scripture, —viz., that man in his natural state is not able to will anything spiritually good, —be true, the whole difficulty in the matter does not seem to be reached by the

establishment of this position. The inability is here distinctly predicated of the will, and this must be attended to and provided for in any principle that may be laid down in answer to the objection about its inconsistency with responsibility. If the general substance of the answer to this objection be, as we have seen it must be, that there is some sense or respect in which man may be said to have ability with reference to the matter under discussion, as well as a sense in which inability attaches to him in this respect, then it is manifestly not sufficient to say that he has ability, because he can do whatever he wills or chooses to do. For this statement really asserts nothing about an ability to will; and as, in the doctrine objected to, this inability is predicated of the will, and not of the capacity for the outward action, good or evil, so also must the corresponding ability—the assertion of which in some sense, or of something equivalent to it, is to form the answer to the objection—be also predicated of the will. The distinction between natural and moral inability, as sometimes explained and applied, does not seem to afford sufficient ground or basis for ascribing, in any sense or any respect, ability to the will, or anything equivalent to this, but only for ascribing to man an ability to do as he wills or chooses; and, therefore, upon the grounds which we have explained, it seems to be inadequate to meet the whole difficulty. If the inability be predicated of the will, as was done by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards, and if it be conceded, as we think it must be, that the obvious objection about the inconsistency of this inability with responsibility can be removed only by showing that, in some sense or respect, ability may be predicated of the will, as well as inability, then it follows that the common distinction, as sometimes explained and applied, is insufficient, because it does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves somewhat of the mystery untouched.

There is another ground for doubt as to the sufficiency of the common answer to this objection when urged as a complete solution of the difficulty, —viz., that this mode of answering the objection seems to imply that the want of will is the only or ultimate obstacle or preventative. Now, although perhaps this statement could not be shown to be erroneous, if we were discussing the subject only on metaphysical grounds, and had to defend merely the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as commonly understood, yet it is at least very doubtful whether such a statement can

be made to meet or explain the theological doctrine as taught by the Reformers and in the standards of our church.

According to the theological doctrine, the want of will to do good is not, strictly speaking, —as is sometimes implied in the application of the distinction between natural and moral ability, to answer the objection about responsibility, —the only cause why men do not do what God requires of them. For though this want of will is the sole proximate cause of the non-performance of spiritual duties, to the exclusion of all external controlling influences, operating irrespectively of, or apart from, man's power of volition, yet, upon scriptural and theological principles, the inability to will is itself resolved into the want of original righteousness, and the entire corruption of man's moral nature. If this theological doctrine, of man's inability to will what is spiritually good, is taught in Scripture at all, it is represented there as involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of original sin or native moral depravity; and the state of matters which this doctrine describes is traced to the will or power of volition as a faculty of man's nature, being characterized and being determined in all its exercises by the bent or tendency of man's actual moral character, of his dispositions and inclinations. According to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, "man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good;" and he had this freedom and power just because he had been created after the image of God, in righteousness and holiness— because this was the character and tendency of His moral constitution. And according to the same scheme of doctrine, to adopt again the words of our Confession, "man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation," and has lost this ability of will just because he has lost the image of God, and fallen under the reigning power of depravity, or has become, as our Confession says, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." If this be so, then it is not true that the sole or ultimate cause why men in their fallen state do not perform what is spiritually good, is that they do not choose or will to do it, since even this want of will itself, or the inability to will, is traceable to something deeper and ulterior as its source or cause.

On these grounds I am much inclined to think that the common distinction between natural and moral ability, however true in itself, and however important in some of its bearings, does not, as sometimes applied, afford a complete explanation of the difficulty connected with the theological doctrine, that man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to spiritual good; and, upon the whole, I am disposed to adopt upon this topic the following statement of Turretine, whose discussion on this subject of free-will, constituting his tenth Locus in the end of the first volume, is deserving of careful perusal: — 'Nec melius elabuntur, qui pertendunt impotentiam istam moralem esse, non naturalem, atque ita rem non absolute et simpliciter homini esse impossibilem, sed illam hominem posse si velit. Nam sive naturalis, sive moralis dicatur impotentia ista (de quo postea); certum est esse homini ineluctabilem, et frustra dici hominem hoc vel illud posse si velit, cum constet eum non posse velle; non quod destituatur potentia naturali volendi, quia sic differt abrutis; sed quod caveat dispositione ad bene volendum, de qua in hac quaestione unice agitur.'

Since, then, it would seem that this distinction of natural and moral inability cannot be so applied as to afford a full explanation of the difficulty charged against the theological doctrine of man's inability by nature and without divine grace to will anything spiritually good, the question still remains, Whether there be any other view or consideration which affords a more complete ground for predicating of man, in some sense, an ability of willing what is good, or of predicating of him something which is virtually equivalent to this, so far as the matter of responsibility is concerned, and may thus afford a fuller answer to the objection founded on the alleged inconsistency between inability and guilt? Before proceeding to consider this question, I must repeat that a survey of the discussions which have taken place regarding it suggests two very obvious reflections, —viz., first, that nothing can now be said upon this subject which has not been said in substance a thousand times before; and, secondly, that the subject is involved in difficulties which never have been fully explained, and never will be fully explained, at least until men get either a new revelation or enlarged faculties.

The subject is one in dealing with which we are entitled, as well as

necessitated, to draw largely upon general considerations, which ought to have great weight and influence in satisfying the mind, —even though they do not bear directly and immediately upon the particular difficulties or objections adduced, and may be, as it were, common-places— valuable and important common-places — applicable to other subjects than this. We refer to such considerations as the unreasonableness of rejecting either of two doctrines, both of which seem to be sufficiently established by their direct and appropriate evidence, —evidence which cannot be directly assailed with success or even plausibility, —to reject either of two such doctrines merely because they appear to us to be inconsistent with each other, or because we are unable to point out in what way their consistency with each other can be demonstrated, — a position which we are not warranted to assume until we have first proved that our capacity of perceiving the harmony of doctrines with each other is the standard or measure of their intrinsic truth or falsehood. Akin to this, and embodying the very same principle, is the unwarrantableness of rejecting a matter of fact, when sufficiently established by its appropriate evidence, even though it may be in some of its aspects and bearings inexplicable, and though it may appear to be inconsistent with other facts, also established and admitted. The inability of man to will anything spiritually good, and his responsibility for not willing and doing it, may be regarded as at once doctrines and facts. They are doctrines clearly taught in Scripture; they are facts in the actual condition of man, established indeed by scriptural statements, but neither of them dependent wholly and exclusively for their evidence upon the authority of Scripture. The right and reasonable course in such a case is to receive and admit both these doctrines, or the facts which they declare, if they appear, after the most careful scrutiny of the evidence, to be sufficiently established, — even though they may continue to appear to us to be irreconcilable with each other.

We need not dwell upon these general considerations, as we have had occasion to advert to them before, —especially when we were considering the doctrine or fact of the entire corruption of human nature in connection with the doctrine or fact of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity as the ground or cause of it. What was then said upon these general topics, and especially with respect to the extent to which it was either needful on the one hand, or practicable on

the other, to explain difficulties or to solve objections, is the more pertinent to our present subject, because, as we have had occasion fully to explain, the inability to will anything spiritually good, which we have shown to be an actual feature in the condition of fallen man, and which we are now called upon to defend, as far as may be necessary and practicable, against the objections of opponents, is, and is represented by all who maintain it as being, a part or a necessary consequence of the state of sinfulness into which man fell, as implied in, or traceable to, the corruption or depravity which has overspread his moral nature. It was "by his fall into a state of sin," as our Confession of Faith says, that man lost all ability of will to anything spiritually good, and that of course he has not now any such ability of will until his will be renewed by divine grace. This being the true import and ground of the doctrine, as we maintain it, —this being the true state of the case, as we represent it, —we may expect to find that difficulties and objections, the same in substance, will be adduced against this doctrine of an inability of will as against the more general doctrine of an entire depravity of moral nature, in which it is involved, and from which it results; and that they may and should be dealt with in both cases in substantially the same way: we may expect to find that the extent to which it is at once needful and practicable to explain the difficulties and to solve the objections, is in both cases the same. More particularly, we may expect to find here, as we found there, that there are difficulties and mysteries connected with the full exposition of the subject, which it is impossible to explain— which run up into questions that he beyond the cognisance of the human faculties— that run up indeed into the one grand difficulty of the existence and prevalence of moral evil under the government of God. We may expect to find that the discussions connected with these objections turn very much upon questions as to the particular place which the really insoluble difficulty is to occupy, and the precise form and aspect in which it is to be represented; and that little or nothing more can be done in the way of dealing with objections than throwing the difficulty further back, — resolving it into some more general principle, and thus bringing it perhaps more into the general line of the analogy of views which we cannot but admit— of considerations which we are somewhat prepared to embrace.

Keeping these general considerations in view, and allowing them their due weight, we would return to the more particular examination of the objection about the incompatibility of inability with responsibility. Now, upon the grounds which have been already indicated, we are satisfied that the principle which contributes more fully than any other to furnish an answer to the objection, —an explanation of the difficulty, —is just the scriptural doctrine which leads us to regard man in his whole history, fallen and unfallen, or the whole human race collectively in their relation to God, as virtually one and indivisible, so far as regards their legal standing and responsibilities, —to contemplate the whole history of the human race as virtually the history of one and the same man, or, what is substantially and practically the same thing, to regard the inability of will to anything spiritually good— which can be proved to attach to man de facto— as a penal infliction, —a punishment justly imposed upon account of previous guilt—the guilt, of course, of Adam's first sin imputed to his posterity. We had formerly occasion to explain, in considering the subject of original sin, that there is no great difficulty in understanding that, by Adam's personal, voluntary act of sin, his own moral nature might become thoroughly ungodly and corrupt, in the way of natural consequence or of penal infliction, or of both; and that, of course, in this way, and through this medium, he might lose or forfeit all the ability of will he once possessed to anything spiritually good, and become subject to an inability of will that could be removed only by supernatural divine grace. And if the guilt of his first sin was imputed to his posterity, then this might, nay should, carry with it in their case all its proper penal consequences, including depravity of will, and the inability which results from it; and there is thus furnished, pro tanto, an explanation or rationale, in the sense and with the limitations already stated, of the inability of will to anything spiritually good attaching to men in their natural condition. The doctrine of our Confession is, that man, —not men, observe, but man, as represented by Adam under the first covenant, —lost this ability of will by his fall into a state of sin; and if the history of the human race in its different stages or periods, considered in relation to God, is thus viewed in its legal aspects and obligations as virtually the history of one man, placed in different circumstances, then the special and peculiar difficulty supposed to be involved in the doctrine of man's actual inability, in his existing condition, to do what God requires of him,

is so far removed, —that is, it is resolved into the one great difficulty of the fall of man or of the human race; and that, again, is resolvable, so far as the ground of difficulties and objections is concerned, into the introduction and continued prevalence of moral evil, —a difficulty which attaches equally in substance, though it may assume a variety of forms and aspects, to every system which admits the existence and moral government of God.

We formerly had occasion to explain, that the doctrine commonly held by Calvinists with respect to the fall of man, and the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, may be reasonably enough regarded as involving this idea, that the trial of Adam was virtually and legally the trial of the human race; that God, in His sovereignty and wisdom, resolved to subject to trial or moral probation, and did try, a creature constituted in a certain manner, endowed with certain qualities and capacities, possessed of full power to stand the trial successfully, and placed in the most favourable circumstances for exercising this power aright; and that God further resolved to regard this trial of one specimen of such a creature as virtually and legally the trial of all the creatures of the same class, so that God might at once treat them, or resolve on treating them, so far as regards their legal obligations, as if they had all failed in the trial, and had thereby justly subjected themselves to the penal consequences of transgression. If the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity be true, it would seem as if it must involve some such idea as this; and then this idea applied to our actual condition does tend to throw some light upon it, —to break the force of some of the objections commonly adduced against it, especially those based upon its alleged injustice in subjecting men to penal inflictions on account of a sin which they did not commit. It affords materials which obviously enough admit of being applied in the way of showing that it cannot be proved that there would be any ground for alleging that God would do them any real injustice in treating them, so far as its penal consequences are concerned, as if they had committed Adam's sin, —that is, as if they had been tried themselves, and had failed in the trial; and that they could not, if so treated, make out any substantial ground for complaint.

We must further observe, as bearing upon this subject, that orthodox divines have generally taught, as a principle sanctioned by Scripture, that sin may be in some sense the punishment of sin. Orthodox divines have usually held this principle, and have, moreover, commonly admitted that it enters as one element into the full exposition of what they believe to be the doctrine of Scripture concerning the fall; and, accordingly, this principle is explained, proved, and defended from objections, in Turretine.

I have thus given a brief summary of what is implied in, or results from, our general doctrine with respect to the fall of man or of the human race, and its bearing upon his character and condition; because it is upon this doctrine as a whole, that the fullest answer to the objection about responsibility, in so far as it can be shown to be necessary to answer it, is based: and nothing can be more reasonable than this, that when we are called upon to explain or defend anything which we have asserted of fallen man, we must be permitted to introduce and apply the whole of the doctrine which we regard Scripture as teaching upon the subject; and to insist that our whole doctrine shall be fairly looked at and examined in its different parts and in its various relations.

Now, to apply these views to the matter in hand, let us consider how they bear upon the alleged inconsistency of inability with responsibility and guilt. There is manifestly no inconsistency between saying that man before his fall had freedom and power to do that which is good, and that he has no such freedom and power now, having wholly lost it by his fall into a state of sin. And, with respect to the difficulty about responsibility, the substance of our position in answer to the objection, —a position based on, and deduced from, those general views of which we have just given a brief summary, —is this: That man is responsible for not willing and doing good, notwithstanding his actual inability to will and to do good, because he is answerable for that inability itself, having, as legally responsible for Adam's sin, inherited the inability, as part of the forfeiture penally due to that first transgression. If the history of the human race is to be regarded, in so far as concerns its legal relation to God, as being

Turretin., Locus ix., Qusest. xv.

virtually the history of one man in different circumstances, —in other words, if the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed is one of the constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, —then this position, which we have just enunciated, is both true and relevant. Its truth, —that is, *ex hypothesi*, upon the assumption of the truth of our fundamental doctrines in regard to the fall of man, —I need not further illustrate; and its relevancy to the matter in hand, as an answer to the objection we are considering, lies in this, that though it does not furnish us with a ground for saying, literally and precisely, of man as he now is, that there is a sense in which we can assert that he has ability of will to what is spiritually good, it at least affords us a ground for saying what is equivalent to this, —what is substantially the same thing, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned, —namely, that he, that is, man, or the human race, as represented in Adam, had ability to will and to do what is good, and lost it by his sin; and that, therefore, he is responsible for the want of it, —as much responsible, so far as regards legal obligations, for all that results from inability, as if he still had the ability in which he was originally created, and which he has righteously forfeited. It is in full accordance with the dictates of right reason and the ordinary sentiments and feelings of mankind, that an ability once possessed, and thereafter righteously forfeited or justly taken away, leaves a man in the very same condition, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned, as a present or existing ability. And this generally admitted principle, viewed in connection with our fundamental doctrines upon the subject, is legitimately available for showing that the objection cannot be established.

I am not satisfied that there is any sense in which it can be literally and precisely said with truth, that man now has an ability of will to what is spiritually good, —except the statement be referred merely to the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution and faculties as a rational being, having the power of volition, which remained unaffected by the fall; and this, we have shown, does not furnish any complete explanation of the difficulty now under consideration. I am not persuaded that any solution meets the difficulty of asserting that man is responsible for his sins and shortcomings, notwithstanding his inability to will and to do what is good, except by showing that he is responsible

for his inability. It is true, indeed, that this inability is involved in, or produced by, the corruption or depravity of nature which attaches to fallen man, and should therefore be admitted as a fact, a real feature of man's actual condition, if supported by satisfactory evidence, even though it could not be explained. But I know of no principle or process by which it can be so fully and completely shown that man is responsible for it, as by regarding it as a penal infliction— a part of the punishment justly imposed on account of previous guilt. This principle does go some length towards explaining the difficulty; for it shows satisfactorily that there is no peculiar difficulty attaching to this subject of inability, as distinguished from that general corruption or depravity characterizing all men, of which it is a component part, or a necessary consequence. There is no reason, then, why we should hesitate about receiving the Scripture doctrine, that man in his fallen state has no ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, and that he is unable, by his own strength, to convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto, on account of its supposed inconsistency with his being responsible for not doing what the divine law requires; for not only have we sufficient direct evidence to establish its truth, — such evidence as would warrant us in at once putting aside all objections that have been adduced against it as mere difficulties, even though no explanation could be given of them, —but, moreover, when we take into view the whole doctrine which Scripture teaches in connection with this subject, we get materials which go some length, at least, in explaining how it is that man is responsible for this inability, and is therefore, a fortiori, responsible, notwithstanding it; while, at the same time, we must admit that this profound and mysterious subject is still left involved in such darkness and difficulty, as to impress upon us the duty of carefully abstaining from presumptuous reasonings and speculations of our own, and of humbly and implicitly receiving whatever God may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

I would further notice how fully this discussion confirms and illustrates the truth of observations which I had formerly occasion to make: first, about the importance of rightly understanding the whole scriptural doctrine concerning man's fall and its consequences, and of having clear and distinct ideas, so far as Scripture affords us materials, of the

constituents of the sinfulness of the state into which he fell; secondly, about the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, tending to throw some light upon this profound and mysterious subject, instead of involving it, as seems to be often supposed, in greater darkness and difficulty; and, thirdly, about the necessity of our having constant regard, in all our investigations into these topics, at once to the virtual identity with respect to judicial standing and legal obligation, and the vast difference, with respect to actual character and condition, between man fallen and man unfallen. There is but one view of the general condition of the human race that at all corresponds, either with the specific statements of Scripture, or with the phenomena which the world in all ages and countries has presented to our contemplation, regarded in connection with the more general aspects of God's character and government, which the Scripture unfolds to us; and that is the view which represents the whole human race as lying under a sentence of condemnation because of sin, —the execution of that sentence being suspended, and many tokens of forbearance and kindness being in the meanwhile vouchsafed to the whole race; while, at the same time, a great and glorious provision has been introduced, and is in operation, fitted and intended to secure the eternal salvation of a portion of the inhabitants of this lost world, who will at last form an innumerable company. This is the view given us in Scripture of the state of the human race: it is confirmed by a survey of the actual realities of man's condition; it throws some light upon phenomena or facts which would otherwise be wholly inexplicable; and, while neither Scripture nor reason affords adequate materials for explaining fully this awful and mysterious reality, we may at least confidently assert, that no additional darkness or difficulty is introduced into it by the doctrine which Scripture does teach concerning it, —namely, that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that by one offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

The Will in Regeneration

The Council of Trent, —being a good deal tied up, according to the principles which they professed to follow as to the rule of faith, by the ancient decisions of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in opposition to the Pelagians, and by some differences of opinion among themselves, —could not well embody in their decisions so much of unsound doctrine as there is good reason to believe would have been agreeable to the great majority of them, or bring out so fully and palpably as they would have wished, their opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. At the same time, it was absolutely necessary, for the maintenance of many of the tenets and practices which constituted the foundation and the main substance of Popery, that the doctrines of grace should be corrupted, —that the salvation of sinners should not be represented, as it was by the Reformers, as being wholly the gift and the work of God, but as being also, in some measure, effected by men themselves, through their own exertions and their own merits. We have already fully explained to what extent this policy was pursued in their decree upon original sin, and how far it was restrained and modified in its development by the difficulties of their situation. In the decree on original sin there is not a great deal that is positively erroneous, though much that is vague and defective. But when, in the sixth session, they proceeded to the great doctrine of justification, they then made the fullest and widest application of all that was erroneous and defective in their decree upon original sin, by explicitly denying that all the actions of unrenewed men are wholly sinful, —that sinful imperfection attaches to all the actions even of renewed men, —and that man, by his fall, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. This denial, however, of the great Protestant doctrine of the utter bondage or servitude of the will of unrenewed men to sin, —of their inability to will anything spiritually good, —was not the only application they made of their erroneous and defective views about the corruption and depravity of human nature, in their bearing upon the natural powers of men with reference to their own salvation. They have further deduced from their doctrine, —that the free-will of fallen men, even in reference to spiritual good accompanying salvation, is only weakened or enfeebled, but not lost or extinguished, —the position that man's free-will co-operates with divine grace in the process of his regeneration, and this in a sense which the Reformers and orthodox Protestant churches have

regarded as inconsistent with scriptural views of man's natural capacities and of the gospel method of salvation.

Their doctrine upon the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in the work of regeneration, is set forth also, like the Romish errors we have already been considering, in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session; being intended, like them, to pave the way for their grand and fundamental heresy on the subject of justification. It is this: "If any one shall say that the free-will of man, moved and excited by God, does not co-operate by assenting or yielding to God, exciting and calling him, in order that he may predispose and prepare himself to receive the grace of justification, or that he cannot refuse his assent, if he chooses, but that he acts altogether like some inanimate thing, and is merely passive, —let him be anathema." Now, here it is asserted, by plain implication, not only that there is free-will, or an ability of will to what is good, in operation before regeneration, but that man, in the exercise of this free-will to good, co-operates with the grace of God in the preliminary movements that precede and prepare for regeneration; and it was, of course, mainly as a foundation for this doctrine of the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in preparing for, and producing regeneration, that the freedom of the will of fallen man to good was asserted. In this way, the work of regeneration is manifestly assigned, partly to the operation of God's grace, and partly to the exercise of the freewill of man, —a power possessed by man in his natural condition, though not made really and effectively operative for his regeneration, until, as the council says in another part of their decree, it be "excited and assisted" by divine grace. If fallen man hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, —which we have shown to be the doctrine of Scripture, —there can, of course, be no such co-operation as this— no such partition of work between God and man, either in preparing for, or in effecting, man's regeneration, because there is nothing in man, in his natural condition, on which such a co-operation can be based, or from which it can spring. There would, therefore, be no great occasion for dwelling further on this subject, were it not that it is intimately connected with a fuller exposition of the doctrine of the Reformers and of the Reformed confessions with respect to the passivity which they ascribed to man in the process of

regeneration, —the renovation of the will which they held to be indispensable before men could will anything spiritually good, — and the freedom of will which they undoubtedly ascribed to men after they were regenerated; and to these topics we would now very briefly direct attention.

The Reformers generally maintained that man was passive in the work of regeneration; and they held this position to be necessarily implied in the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and of his inability to will anything spiritually good, and also to have its own appropriate and specific scriptural evidence in the representation given us in the word of God of the origin and nature of the great change which is effected upon men by the operation of the divine Spirit. But as the subject is rather an intricate one, and as the doctrine of the Reformers, which is also the doctrine of our standards upon this subject of passivity as opposed to co-operation, is liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented, it may be proper to give some explanation of the sense in which, and the limitations with which, they maintained it.

The Reformers did not, as the Council of Trent represents them, describe man as acting in this matter the part merely of an inanimate object, such as a stock or a stone, though some incautious expressions of Luther's may have afforded a plausible pretence for the accusation. Calvin, adverting to the unfair use that had been made by the Romanists of some of Luther's expressions upon this subject, asserts that the whole substance of the doctrine that had been taught by Luther upon this subject, was held and defended by all the Reformers: "*Quod summum est in hac quaestione, et cujus gratia reliqua omnia dicuntur, quemadmodum initio propositum fuit a Lutero et aliis, ita hodie defendimus, ac ne in illis quidem, quae dixi ad fidem non adeo necessaria esse, aliud interest, nisi quod forma loquendi sic fuit mitigata, ne quid offensionis haberet.*" Now, the Reformers, as I formerly showed, held that man retained, after his fall, that natural liberty with which, according to our Confession, God hath endowed the will of man, so that he never could become like a stock, or a stone, or an irrational animal, but retained his natural power of volition along with all that rationality implies. The passivity which the Reformers ascribed to man in the process of regeneration, implied chiefly these two

things, —first, that God's grace must begin the work without any aid or co-operation, in the first instance, from man himself, there being nothing in man, in his natural state, since he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, from which such aid or co-operation can proceed; and, secondly, that God's grace must by itself effect some change on man, before man himself can do anything, or exercise any activity in the matter, by willing or doing anything spiritually good; and all this, surely, is very plainly implied in the scriptural doctrines of man's depravity and inability of will, and in the scriptural representations of the origin and nature of regeneration.

Again, the Reformers did not teach that man was altogether passive, or the mere inactive subject of the operation of divine grace, or of the agency of the Holy Ghost, in the whole of the process that might be comprehended under the name of regeneration, taken in its wider sense. Regeneration may be taken either in a more limited sense, —as including only the first implantation of spiritual life, by which a man, dead in sins and trespasses, is quickened or made alive, so that he is no longer dead; or it may be taken in a wider sense, as comprehending the whole of the process by which he is renewed, or made over again, in the whole man, after the image of God, —as including the production of saving faith and union to Christ, or very much what is described in our standards under the name of effectual calling. Now, it was only of regeneration, as understood in the first or more limited of these senses, that the Reformers maintained that man in the process was wholly passive, and not active; for they did not dispute that, before the process in the second and more enlarged sense was completed, man was spiritually alive and spiritually active, and continued so ever after during the whole process of his sanctification. This is what is taught in the standards of our church, when it is said, in the Confession of Faith, that in the work of effectual calling man "is altogether passive, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it and in the Larger Catechism, that God in effectual calling renews and powerfully determines men's wills, "so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer His call."

Neither did the Reformers teach, as they are often represented by Papists, that God regenerates or converts men against their will; for their doctrine upon this point, —and it is in entire accordance with all they teach upon the whole subject, —is, that He makes them willing by renewing their wills, or by making their wills good in place of bad. These were the doctrines which were taught by the Reformers upon this point, and which were condemned, and intended to be condemned, by the Council of Trent, in the canon which we have quoted.

Some of the very strong and incautious expressions which were used by Luther in setting forth the passivity of man in the work of regeneration, — and which Calvin apologizes for in the context of the passage above quoted from him, —seem to have occasioned some reaction of sentiment in the Lutheran church upon this subject, and to have thus produced, though not till after Luther's death, what was called the Synergistic Controversy, or the dispute about the co-operation of man with God in this matter. Melancthon seems to have given some countenance to the error of the Synergists, as they were called, by using, on a variety of occasions, —though not, it would appear, till after Luther's death, — expressions which seemed, in all fairness, to imply that, when divine grace began to operate upon men, with a view to their regeneration or conversion; it found in them at the very first, and antecedently to any real change actually effected upon them, not merely rationality and the natural power of volition, which rendered them the fit subjects, the suitable recipients, of a supernatural spiritual influence, but such a natural capacity of willing what was spiritually good, as rendered them capable at once of actively co-operating or concurring even with the first movements of the divine Spirit. This controversy continued to agitate the Lutheran church for many years, both before and after the death of Melancthon, -Strigelius being the chief defender of the doctrine of co-operation, and Flaccus Illyricus its principal opponent. It was at length settled, like many of their other controversial differences, by the "Formula Concordiae," finally adopted and promulgated in 1580, which, though it explicitly condemned what were understood to be the views of the defenders of the doctrine of co-operation, was subscribed by Strigelius himself. As the "Formula Concordiae" contains a very distinct condemnation of the doctrine of co-operation even in its mildest and

most modified form, as asserted by some of the followers of Melancthon, —and as it contains, indeed, a full exposition of the whole subject, carefully prepared after the whole matter had been subjected to a long and searching controversy, —it is fitted to throw⁷ considerable light upon the difficulties, intricacies, and ambiguities of the question, and it may conduce to the explanation of the subject to quote an extract from it. It condemns this doctrine, "(cum docetur), licet homo non renatus, ratione liberi arbitrii, ante sui regenerationem infirmior quidem sit, quam ut conversionis suse initium facere, atque propriis viribus sese ad Deum convertere, et legi Dei toto corde parere valeat: tamen, si Spiritus Sanctus praedicatione verbi initium fecerit, suamque gratiam in verbo homini obtulerit, turn hominis voluntatem, propriis et naturalibus suis viribus quodammodo aliquid, licet id modiculum, infirmum et languidum admodum sit, conversionem adjuvare, atque cooperari, et se ipsam ad gratiam applicare" et "praeparare."

I may mention here by the way, that Bossuet, in the Eighth Book of his History of the Variations, has, by a bold stroke of his usual unscrupulous policy, attempted to convict even the Formula Concordiae of the heresy of semi-Pelagianism on the subject of co-operation, though, beyond all question, it contains nothing which makes so near an approach to Pelagianism as the decrees of the Council of Trent. Bossuet, indeed, shows satisfactorily that some of the Lutheran statements connected with this point are not very clear and consistent; but the only fair inference deducible from any inconsistencies which he has been able to produce, is one which might equally be illustrated by an examination of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and of the symbolical books of churches that have been far sounder in their doctrinal views than the Church of Rome, — namely, that it is not possible for any man, or body of men, to be thoroughly and consistently anti-Pelagian, even on the subjects of the depravity and impotency of human nature, and regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit, though they may intend to be so, and think that they are so, unless they admit what are commonly reckoned the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism.

The great practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the doctrine they maintained as to the passivity of man in the work of

regeneration, —and, indeed, the substance of what they held to be implied in this doctrine, —was the necessity of a renovation of man's will by the sole power of God, as antecedently indispensable to his exerting any real activity in willing or doing anything spiritually good. If man has not by nature any ability of will for spiritual good, he must receive it wholly from grace; if he has no power of will in himself, he must receive it from God; if it does not exist in him, it must be put into him by God's power. That all this is necessary, is plainly implied in the scriptural descriptions of man's natural condition; that all this is done in the process of regeneration, is plainly implied in those scriptural descriptions which represent it as a quickening or vivifying of those who were dead in sins and trespasses, —as giving men new hearts, —as taking away their stony hearts, and giving them hearts of flesh. The Reformers, accordingly, were accustomed to describe the process as involving a renovation of men's wills, —a changing them from evil to good; not, of course, the creating and bestowing of a new and different power of volition, but giving it different capacities, and bringing it under wholly different influences. It is this renovation of the will that stands out as that in the whole process of regeneration, —taking the word in its most extensive sense, that of effectual calling, —which most imperatively demands the immediate and exclusive agency of divine power, — the special operation of the Holy Ghost, —for its accomplishment.

What are usually regarded, on scriptural grounds, as constituting the leading steps in the work of effectual calling, are the conviction of sin, the illumination of the understanding, and the embracing of Christ. These may all seem to be natural and easy processes, which might be supposed, perhaps, to result, without any supernatural divine agency, from the influence of the views opened up to us in Scripture, or at least without anything more than the gracious power of God exciting and assisting us, as the Council of Trent says, —exciting us to attend to what is said in Scripture, and assisting our own efforts to understand and realize it, —exciting us to exercise our natural power of attention, and assisting us in the exercise of our natural power of acquiring knowledge, and of our natural capacity of receiving impressions from what we know. Were nothing more necessary, the exciting and assisting power of divine grace might appear to be plausibly represented as sufficient. But the grand

obstacle which man's natural character and condition present to his reception of the truth and his embracing Christ, is the entire aversion of his will to anything spiritually good, his utter inability to will anything that is pleasing to God, his entire bondage or servitude to sin. Hence the necessity, not only of the conviction of sin and the illumination of the understanding, but also of the renovation of the will, in order to men's embracing Christ. The aversion or enmity of his natural mind to God and divine things must be taken away, —a new and different disposition, taste, or tendency from anything that exists in unrenewed men, or that can be elicited from the ordinary operation of their natural principles, must be communicated to them; and this can proceed only from the immediate operation of divine grace, —the special agency of the Holy Spirit. The process needful for removing this aversion, and communicating a different and opposite tendency, must be something very different from merely exciting, stirring up what is lazy or languid, and assisting what is weak or feeble; and yet this is all which the doctrine of the Council of Trent admits of. Orthodox Protestants have been accustomed to contrast the strong and energetic language of Scripture upon this subject with the feeble and mincing phraseology of the Romish council, and to ask whether exciting and assisting the will, which was in itself weak and feeble, was anything like creating a new heart; and whether God's working in us to will as well as to do, resembled our willing what was good by our own powers, with some assistance furnished to us by God. The contrast is quite sufficient to show that the Church of Rome ascribes to man what man has not, and cannot effect, and takes from God what He claims to Himself, and what His almighty power alone can accomplish.

Much, indeed, is said even by the Council of Trent about the necessity of divine grace, and about the impossibility of men being converted or regenerated if left wholly to their own unaided resources and exertions; and so far the Church of Rome has not incurred the guilt of teaching open and palpable Pelagianism, as many bearing the name of Protestants have done; but, by ascribing more to man than man can effect, and by ascribing less to God in the process than He claims to Himself, she has sanctioned anti-scriptural error in a matter of vast importance, and error of a kind peculiarly fitted to exert an injurious influence. Men are

strongly prone to magnify their own powers and capacities, to claim for themselves some influential share in anything that affects their character and their happiness. General declarations of the necessity of divine grace to aid or assist them in the process, will be but feeble barriers against the pride, and presumption, and self-confidence of the human heart. Men may admit the truth of these declarations; but if they are taught, also, as the Church of Rome teaches, that they have in themselves some natural power or freedom of will, by which they can co-operate with God's grace from the very time when it is first exerted upon them, or, as Moehler expresses it, that "by the mutual interworking of the Holy Spirit and of the creature freely co-operating, justification really commences," they will be very apt to leave the grace of God out of view, and practically to rely upon themselves. Experience abundantly proves, that it is of the last importance that men's views upon all these subjects should be both correct and definite, and that any error or deviation from Scripture is not only wrong in itself, and directly injurious in its influence so far as it reaches, but tends, even beyond its own proper sphere, to introduce indefinite and confused impressions.

Nothing is more common than to hear men admit the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, who make it manifest that they attach no definite practical idea to the admission; and the cause is to be found not so much in this, that they do not in some sense believe what they admit, but that they also hold some defective and erroneous view-s upon the subject, —some error mingled with the truth regarding it, —which introduces indefiniteness and confusion into all their impressions concerning it. Thus it is that the admission by Papists of the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, so long as they also hold that man has some natural power or freedom to will what is spiritually good, and that, in the exercise of this natural power of free-will, he actively co-operates with God in the production of the whole process, tends only to produce confusion of view, and indefiniteness of impression, in regard to the whole matter. The doctrine of Scripture, on the contrary, is fitted to produce distinct and definite impressions upon this subject, by denying to man any natural ability to will anything spiritually good, and by asserting the necessity of the renovation of the will by the sole operation of God's gracious power before any spiritual activity can be manifested—

before any good volitions can be produced. Here is a clear and definite barrier interposed to men's natural tendency to magnify their own natural powers. If men admit this, their impressions of their own utter helplessness and entire dependence upon divine grace must be much more precise and definite than they can be upon any other theory; while the tendency of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, or of any similar doctrine, which leaves no one part of the process of regeneration to divine grace alone, but represents man as co-operating more or less in the exercise of his natural power of free-will in the whole of the process, is to lead men to rely upon themselves, and to claim to themselves some share in everything that contributes to promote their own happiness and welfare.

We are not, however, considering at present the general, subject of regeneration, conversion, or effectual calling, but only that of free-will in connection with it; and we must proceed to notice very briefly, in conclusion, the freedom ascribed by the Reformers to the will of men after they are regenerated. And here, again, we may take the statement of what was generally taught by the Reformers from our own Confession of Faith, which says, "When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by His grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good." Here, again, is freedom of will ascribed to man in his regenerate state, —that is, an ability to will good as well as to will evil, — whereas, formerly, he had power or freedom only to will evil. In the regeneration of his nature, the reigning power of depravity is subdued, and all the effects which it produced are more or less fully taken away. One of the principal of these effects was the utter bondage or servitude of the will to sin, because of the ungodly and depraved tendency of the whole moral nature to what was displeasing and offensive to God. This ungodly and depraved tendency is now in conversion to a large extent removed, and an opposite tendency is implanted. Thus the will is set free, or emancipated, from the bondage under which it was held. It is no longer subjected to a necessity, arising from the general character and tendency of man's moral nature, to will only what is evil, but is able also freely to will what is good; and it does freely will what is good, though, from the remaining corruption and depravity of man's nature, it still wills

also what is evil. It is not emancipated from the influence of God's decrees fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass; it is not placed beyond the control of His providence, whereby, in the execution of His decrees, He ever rules and governs all His creatures and all their actions. It is not set free from the operation of those general laws which God has impressed upon man's mental constitution for directing the exercise of his faculties and regulating his mental processes; but it is set free from the dominion of sin, exempted from the necessity of willing only what is evil, and made equally able freely to will what is good. It has recovered, to a large extent, the only liberty it ever lost, and is determined and characterized now, as it had been in all the previous stages of man's history, both before and after his fall, by man's general moral character and tendencies, —free to good, —when man had the image of God and original righteousness, but yet mutable, so that it could will evil; in bondage, —when man was the slave of sin, so that it could will only evil, and not good; emancipated, — when man was regenerated, so that it could freely will good as well as evil, though still bearing many traces of its former bondage and of its injurious effects; and, finally, to adopt again the language of our Confession of Faith, in closing the admirable chapter on this subject, to be made " perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the views held by the Reformers and by the compilers of the standards of our church, with regard to the liberation of the will in regeneration from entire bondage, or servitude from sin, and the power or freedom which thereafter it enjoys and exercises to will good as well as evil, decidedly confirm the statements we formerly made as to the general import and relations of their whole doctrine on the freedom or liberty of the will of man, and the servitude or necessity that might be ascribed to it. But as we have taken the liberty of pointing out the defectiveness of the discussion of this subject by some very eminent orthodox theologians, as if it were entirely comprehended in the discussion of the question as to the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of philosophical necessity, it may be proper now to observe that there is nothing in our standards inconsistent with the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as it is commonly understood. From the explanations which have been given, it is plain enough, that while, on the

one hand, neither the doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen and unrenewed man to sin because of depravity, nor any other doctrine of Calvinism, necessarily requires the adoption and maintenance of the doctrine of philosophical necessity; so, on the other hand, neither the general liberty which our Confession ascribes to the will of man absolutely and in all circumstances, nor the special liberty which it ascribes to the will of man unfallen and of man regenerated, excludes, or is inconsistent with, that doctrine. Men who believe the whole Calvinistic system of theology, as set forth in the standards of our church, are, I think, fully warranted, in consistency with their theological convictions, to treat what is commonly called philosophical necessity purely as a question in philosophy; and to admit or reject it according to the view they may have formed of the psychological and metaphysical grounds on which it has been advocated and opposed.

God's Providence, and Mans Sin

There is one other topic, —and only one, —of those that were subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and that are adverted to in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, to which I mean to advert, —namely, what is usually called the cause of sin, and especially the providence of God in its relation to the sinful actions of men. This is the most difficult and perplexing subject that ever has been, or perhaps ever can be, investigated by the mind of man; and it has been the cause or the occasion of a great deal of very unwarranted and presumptuous speculation. Indeed, it may be said to be the one grand difficulty into which all the leading difficulties involved in our speculations upon religious subjects may be shown to resolve themselves. The difficulty is a very obvious one, —so obvious, that it must occur to every one who has ever reflected upon the subject. It is, indeed, virtually the question of the origin of moral evil, —the question why moral evil, with all its fearful and permanent consequences, was permitted under the government of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness; and why it is to continue without end to exert its

ruinous influence upon the character and destiny of God's creatures, —an inquiry which, from the very nature of the case, lies plainly beyond the range of men's faculties, and about which we can know nothing certain or satisfactory, except what God Himself may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

The general question, indeed, of the origin and prevalence of moral evil has usually been admitted by men to be beyond the range of the human faculties; but there are other questions of a more limited description, connected with this subject, on which many have thought themselves more at liberty to indulge in speculation, though, in truth, the difficulties that attach to them are as great— and, indeed, the very same— as those which beset the general question. The question which was discussed between the Reformers and the Church of Rome upon this topic, was chiefly this: What is the nature of the agency which God exerts in regard to the sinful actions of His responsible creatures; and, more especially, whether the agency which the Reformers usually ascribed to Him in this matter afforded ground for the allegation that they made Him the author of sin. The general subject of the origin of moral evil was not, to any considerable extent, formally discussed between them. Neither can it be said that the subject of God's predestination, or of His fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, forms one of the proper subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; for although Romish writers in the sixteenth century, and ever since, have most commonly opposed the doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject, and denied God's fore-ordination of all events, yet the Church of Rome can scarcely be said to be committed on either side of this question. The subject, indeed, was discussed in the Council of Trent; and it is a curious and interesting fact, that the two sides of this question (for it has only two sides, though many elaborate attempts have been made to establish intermediate positions, or positions that seem to be intermediate) were defended by opposite parties in the council, and that the respective grounds on which the opposite opinions are founded were fully brought forward.

From an unwillingness to go directly in the teeth of Augustine, and from the difference of opinion that subsisted among themselves, the council

gave no decision either on the more general question of God's predestination of all events, or on the more specific question of election of men individually to everlasting life, though these subjects occupied a prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and though an opposite view to that taught by the Reformers has usually been supported by Romish writers. The council anathematized, indeed, in the seventeenth canon of this sixth session, the doctrine that the grace of justification is enjoyed only by those who are predestinated to life, and who finally attain to it; but in this error they had some countenance from Augustine, who generally included regeneration in justification, and who held that some men who were regenerated, though none who were predestinated to life, —for he made a distinction between these two things, which are most clearly and fully identified in Scripture, —might fall away, and finally perish. They taught, also, that believers could not, without a special revelation, attain to a certainty that they belonged to the number of the elect; but this does not necessarily imply any deliverance upon the subject of election itself. Accordingly, we find that it was not so much the decrees of God, as the execution of His decrees in providence, that formed the subject of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists in the sixteenth century. The Reformers, —from the views they held as to the entire corruption and depravity of man, and his inability of will, in his unregenerate state, to anything spiritually good, —were naturally led to speak of, and discuss, the way and manner in which the sinful actions of men were produced or brought into existence, —in other words, the cause of sin. This, therefore, —namely, the cause of sin, or the investigation of the source or sources to which the sinful actions of men are to be ascribed, —became an important topic of discussion, as intimately connected with the depravity of human nature, and the natural bondage of the will to sin.

Most of the theological works of that period have a chapter upon this subject, "De causa peccati." Calvin, in the beginning of the second book of his Institutes, after discussing the fall, the depravity of man, and the bondage of his will, has a chapter to explain, "Quomodo operetur Deus in cordibus hominum," before he proceeds to answer the objections adduced against his doctrine, and in defence of free-will. The Romanists eagerly laid hold of the statements of the Reformers upon this subject, —

upon the cause of sin, and the agency, direct or indirect, of God in regard to men's sinful actions, —and laboured to extract from them some plausible grounds for the allegation that their doctrine made God the author of sin. The Council of Trent, accordingly, in the canon which immediately succeeds the two on free-will already discussed, anathematizes the doctrine imputed by implication to the Reformers, "that God works (operari) evil actions as well as good ones, not only permissively (non permissive solum), but also properly and per se, so that the treachery of Judas was His proper work no less than the calling of Paul." It is a remarkable fact, that the ground, and the only ground, they had for ascribing this offensive statement about Judas and Paul to the Reformers was, that Melancthon made a statement to that effect in the earliest edition of his Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans while none of the other Reformers, and least of all Calvin, had ever made any statements of a similar kind. Indeed, Calvin, in his Antidote, Â§ expresses his disapprobation of the statement which Melancthon had made, that the treachery of Judas was the proper work of God as much as the calling of Paul. Independently, however, of such rash and offensive statements as some of those contained in the earlier writings of Melancthon, the Romanists charged the Reformers in general with so representing and describing the agency of God, in regard to the sinful actions of man, as to make Him the author of sin. And in Romish works, not only of that, but of every subsequent age, this has been one of the leading accusations brought against them.

As early as 1521, the Faculty of the Sorbonne charged Luther with Manichaeism, as Augustine had been charged on the same ground by the Pelagians; and in our own day, Moehler, who belongs to the more candid class of Romish controversialists, —though that is no great praise, and though his candour, after all, is more apparent than real, —gravely assures us that Luther's views approximated to the Gnostice-Manichasan, while Zwingle's resembled the Pantheistic. Bellarmine has urged this charge against the Reformers, —that they make God the author of sin, — at great length, and with great earnestness, having devoted to it the whole of the second of his six books, de Amissione gratioe et statu peccati, the first being occupied with an elaborate attempt to establish the proper distinction between mortal and venial sin, —a position of much more

importance, both theoretically and practically, in the Popish system than it might at first sight appear to be. The Lutherans, before Bellarmine's time, had abandoned most of the doctrines of their master that afforded any very plausible ground for this charge; and Bellarmine accordingly lets them off, and directs his assault against Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza. Melancthon, indeed, had gone from one extreme to another upon this subject, and, in the later editions of his *Loci Communes*, resolved the cause of sin into the will of man choosing sin spontaneously, which is certainly true so far as it goes, and important in its own place, but which very manifestly does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves the main difficulty wholly untouched. After the death of Melancthon, the Lutherans generally exhibited the most bitter virulence against Calvin and his followers, and usually made common cause with the Papists in representing them as making God the author of sin, as we see in the answers of Calvin and Beza to the furious assaults of Westphalus and Heshusius. It was in order to establish this charge that an eminent Lutheran divine wrote a book which he called "Calvinus Turcisans," or Calvin Turkising, —that is, teaching the doctrine of the Turks or Mahometans, —phrases often occurring in this connection in the theology of the latter part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth centuries. Bellarmine admits that Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza disclaimed the doctrine that God was the author of sin, and that they maintained that no such inference was deducible from anything they had ever taught; but he professes to show that their doctrines respecting the agency or providence of God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, afford satisfactory grounds for the following startling conclusions: first, that they make God the author of sin; secondly, that they represent God as truly sinning; and, thirdly, that they represent God alone, and not man at all, as the sinner in the sinful actions of men; and then he formally and elaborately proves that God is not a sinner, or the author of sin, and that, consequently, the doctrine of these Reformers upon this subject is false.

The Reformers, of course, regarded these conclusions, which the Papists and Lutherans deduced from their doctrines, as blasphemies, which they abhorred as much as their opponents, and denied that they had ever afforded any good grounds for charging these blasphemies upon them. The substance of their defence against the charge may be embodied in the

following propositions: first, that they ascribed to God's providence no other part or agency in respect to the sinful actions of men than the word of God ascribed to it, and that the word of God ascribed to it something more than a mere permission; secondly, that ascribing to God something more than a mere permission with regard to the sinful actions of men, did not necessarily imply that He was the author of sin, or at all involve Him in the guilt of the sinful actions which they performed; and, thirdly, that the difficulties attaching to the exposition of this subject, —difficulties which they did not profess to be able to solve, —afforded no sufficient grounds for refusing to receive what Scripture taught regarding it, or for refusing to embody the substance of scriptural teaching upon the point, in propositions or doctrines that ought to be professed and maintained as a portion of God's revealed truth. Now, it is plain from this statement, that everything depends upon the answer to the question, "What is the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject, —the subject being, not whether God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, though that is intimately connected with it, but what is the nature and extent of His agency in providence, with respect to the sinful actions which men perform; and then, thereafter, whether this which He does in the matter, —that is, which the Scripture appears to ascribe to Him, —can be proved to involve Him in the guilt of their sins, or to exempt them from guilt. Now, the investigation of these questions has given rise to an almost boundless extent of intricate discussion, —an almost endless number of minute and perplexing distinctions. I can only allude to the most obvious and important features of the question, without entering into any detail. It is important to notice, in the first place, that the Reformers all felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying, in distinct and explicit propositions, the sum and substance of what seems plainly indicated in Scripture, as to the providence or agency of God in connection with the sinful actions of men. The Scriptures very plainly teach that God is not the author of sin, —that He incurs no guilt, and commits no sin, when His intelligent and responsible creatures violate the law which He has given them. And yet they also seem so plainly to ascribe to Him an agency or efficiency, both in regard to the introduction and continuance of that general system of things, of which the sinful actions of His creatures constitute so prominent a feature, — and likewise in regard to the particular sinful actions which they perform, —that a difficulty must at

once be felt by every one who attempts to embody, in distinct propositions, the sum and substance of what the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject is. It has been very common to represent this as the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, —namely, that, while God is to be regarded as the author or cause of the good actions of His creatures, He only permits their wicked actions, but is not in any sense the author or the cause of them; permits them, —not, of course, in the sense of not prohibiting them, for every sin is forbidden by Him, and is an act of disobedience to His revealed will, — but in the sense of not preventing them from taking place. It is, of course, true that in this sense God permits— that is, does not prevent— the sinful actions which yet He prohibits, and as undoubtedly He could prevent them, if He so willed. Even this position of His permitting them presents to us difficulties with respect to the divine procedure, and the principles by which it is regulated, which we are utterly incompetent fully to solve.

But the main question, upon the point we are now considering, is this, Does the position, that God permits the sinful actions of His creatures, exhaust the whole of what the Scripture teaches us as to His agency in connection with them? The Church of Rome maintains that it does, for this is plainly implied in the canon formerly quoted ("permissive solum"); while the Reformers, in general, maintained that it did not, and held that the Scriptures ascribed to God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, something more than a mere permission, or what they were accustomed to call *nuda, otiosa, et inefficax permissio*; and it was, of course, upon this something more, that the charge of making God the author of sin was chiefly based. The Reformers felt the difficulty of embodying this in distinct and definite propositions, and some of them have made rash and incautious statements in attempting it. But they decidedly maintained that a mere permission did not fully bring out the place which the Scripture ascribes to God's agency in relation to the sinful actions of men. They usually admitted, indeed, that permission, if it were understood not negatively, but positively, —not as indicating that God willed nothing and did nothing in the matter, but as implying that He, by a positive act of volition, resolved that He would not interpose to prevent men from doing the sin which they wished to commit, — might be employed ordinarily, in common popular use, as a compendious and correct enough description

of what God did in regard to sinful actions, especially as there was no other ready and compendious way of expressing the scriptural doctrine upon the subject, but what was liable to misconstruction, and might be fitted to produce erroneous impressions. But they held the Scripture evidence for something more than permission, even in this positive sense, to be conclusive, even while they felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying in distinct and definite statements, what this was. And, accordingly, Calvin, after expressing his concurrence with the canon of the Council of Trent in rejecting the position that the treachery of Judas was as much the work of God as the calling of Paul, proceeds immediately to say: "Sed permissive tantum agere Deum in malis, cui persuadeant, nisi qui totam Scripturse doctrinam ignorat?" And after referring to some scriptural statements, and giving some quotations from Augustine, he adds: "Nihil enim hie audimus quod non iisdem prope verbis, Scriptura docet. Nam et inclinandi et vertendi, obdurandi, et agendi verba illic exprimuntur." The Reformers, Calvin, in explaining their views upon this subject, were accustomed to say, that the wicked actions of men, —that is, deeds done by them in disobedience to God's prohibition, and justly exposing them to the punishment which God had denounced against all transgressors, —were yet not done "Deo inscio," or "ignorante," without God's knowledge; or "Deo invito," against His will, or without His consent, —that is, without His having, in some sense, willed that they should take place; or "Deo otiose spectante,"— that is, while He looked on simply as an inactive spectator, who took no part, in any sense, in bringing them about. And if it was true negatively, that wicked actions were not performed "Deo inscio, invito, vel otiose spectante" (and to question this, was plainly to deny that infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, are actually exercised at all times in the government of the world, in the, administration of providence), it followed that His agency in regard to them was something more than a mere permission, a mere resolution adopted and acted upon to abstain from interfering to prevent them.

But without enlarging on the explanation of subtleties in which men have often found no end in wandering mazes lost, I would proceed at once to state in what way this very difficult and perplexing subject is explained in our Confession of Faith, in entire - accordance with the doctrine of the

Reformers, and in opposition to the "mere permission" of the Council of Trent. It is in this way: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." In this statement there is apparent at once the deep conviction of the necessity, in order to bringing out fully the whole substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject, to ascribe to God something more than a bare permission in regard to men's sinful actions, combined with the felt difficulty of stating, with anything like fulness, and at the same time explicitness, what this something more is; while another observation I have already made, in regard to the course pursued by the Reformers in discussing this subject, is also illustrated by the fact, that, in the next chapter of the Confession, the word "permit" is used alone as descriptive of what God did in regard to the fall of Adam, from the felt difficulty, apparently, of using any other word without needing to introduce along with it explanations and qualifications, in order to guard against error and misconstruction.

But, perhaps, it may be asked, why maintain anything doctrinally beyond permission, when it seems so difficult practically to explain and develop it with precision and safety? Now, the answer to this question is just, that which was given by Calvin, — namely, that no man can believe in a mere permission, unless he be entirely ignorant of the whole doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the providence or agency of God with respect to the sinful actions of His creatures; and that, therefore, any one who professes to give the sum and substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, must deny the doctrine of a mere permission, and assert that God, in His providence, does something more, in regard to men's sinful actions, than merely resolving to abstain from interfering to prevent what He has certainly prohibited. The evidence to this effect may be said to pervade the word of God. It is found not only in general statements as to the character and results of the providence which God is constantly

exercising over all His creatures and all their actions, and more especially His agency and operations in connection with the motives and conduct of wicked men, but also in the views unfolded to us there with respect to the connection that subsists in fact between the sinful actions which men perform, and the actual accomplishment of some of God's purposes or designs of justice or of mercy; and perhaps still more directly in statements which explicitly ascribe to God a very direct connection with certain specific wicked actions, as well as to those who performed them. We may select an instance from this last department of scriptural evidence, and illustrate it by an observation or two, merely to indicate the nature of the proof.

It is said, (e The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." With respect to the same transaction, it is said in First Book of Chronicles, "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Now, this numbering of Israel was undoubtedly a sinful action of David's, done by him freely and spontaneously, without any compulsion, in the cherished indulgence of a sinful state of mind or motive. It stood, in this respect, on the same footing as any other sin which David himself, or any other man, ever committed; and it would be quite just to apply to it the Apostle James's description of the generation of sin, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust" (or evil desire), "and enticed. Then, when lust" (or evil desire) "hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." And yet this action of David, in which he was doing what God had forbidden, — transgressing God's law, and incurring guilt and the divine displeasure, — is expressly ascribed in Scripture also to God, and to Satan, in terms which, in all fair construction, imply that Satan had some share, exerted some efficiency, in bringing it about, and that God also contributed in some sense, and to some extent, to bring it about, — intending to employ it as a means of executing His just and righteous purpose or design of punishing Israel for their sins. It seems scarcely possible for any man to receive as true the statement of Scripture upon this point, without being constrained to admit that there was, and must have been, a sense in which God willed that David should number the people, and accordingly did something, or exerted some efficiency, in order to bring about this result. If, then, we would fully bring out the

substance of what Scripture teaches us upon this point, we must say that God, Satan, and David, were all in some way or other concerned or combined in the production of this sinful action. We are bound, indeed, to believe, —for so the word of God teaches, — that the sinfulness of the action proceeded only from the creature, that is, from Satan and David, — Satan incurring guilt by what he did in the matter in provoking David to number Israel, but not thereby diminishing in the least David's guilt in yielding to the temptation, —and that God was not the author or approver of what was sinful in the action; but we are also bound to believe, if we submit implicitly, as we ought to do, to the fair impression of what Scripture says, that in regard to the action itself, which was sinful as produced or performed by Satan and David, God did more than merely permit it, or abstain, even in a positive sense, from interfering to prevent it, and that in some sense, and in some manner, He did do something in the way of its being brought about. From the difficulty, indeed, of conceiving and explaining how God could have moved David to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah," while yet the sinfulness of the action was David's only, not God's, we might be tempted to make a violent effort to explain away the statement, were there nothing else in Scripture to lead us to ascribe to God anything more in regard to men's sinful actions than a mere permission. But the inference to which these passages so plainly point is in entire accordance with what Scripture teaches in many places; and, indeed, with all it teaches us generally in regard to God's providence and men's sins.

There are not, indeed, many instances in Scripture in which, with respect to specific acts of sin, we have an explicit ascription of some share in bringing them about to God, to Satan, and to man. But we have other instances of a precisely similar kind, as in the robberies committed upon Job's property, and in that which was at once the most important event that ever took place, and the greatest crime that ever was committed, — the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. In these cases, the agency of God, the agency of Satan, and the agency of wicked men, are distinctly recognised and asserted; and it is, therefore, our duty to acknowledge, as a general truth, that all these parties were concerned in them, and to beware of excluding the agency of any of them, or perverting its true character, because we cannot fully conceive or explain how these parties could, in

conformity with the general representations given us in Scripture of their respective characters and principles of procedure, concur in that arrangement by which the actions were brought about. It is our part to receive each portion of the information which the Scripture gives us concerning the origin of men's sinful actions, and to allow each truth regarding it to exert its own distinct and appropriate influence upon our minds, undisturbed by other truths, kept also in their proper place, and applied according to their true import and real bearing; not allowing the scriptural truth concerning God's agency and Satan's agency, with respect to sinful actions, to diminish in the least our sense of man's responsibility and guilt, and not allowing the conviction which Scripture most fully warrants, —that God's agency is connected in some way with men's sins, —to lead us to doubt, or to fail in realizing, His immaculate holiness and irreconcilable hatred to all sin, —but employing it only to deepen our impressions of His "almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness."

We cannot dwell longer upon the scriptural proof in support of the doctrine of the Reformers and of our Confession of Faith, and in opposition to that of the Council of Trent, upon this subject. As to any further attempts to explain the kind and degree of God's agency in connection with men's sinful actions, and to unfold precisely what it is that He does in contributing, in some way and in some sense, to bring them about, the Reformers usually confined themselves to the expressions which Scripture itself employs, being aware that upon a subject so difficult and mysterious it became them to abstain from merely human speculations, and to take care to assert nothing about God's hidden and unseen agency but what He Himself had clearly warranted. But while they did not, in general, profess directly to explain, except in scriptural language, the way and manner in which God acted in respect to men's sinful actions, they were sometimes tempted to engage in very intricate discussions upon this subject, in answering the allegation of their opponents, that, by ascribing to God anything more than a mere permission in regard to men's sins, they made Him the author of sin; discussions which too often resulted in some attempt to explain more fully and minutely than Scripture affords us materials for doing, what it was that God really did in connection with men's sinful actions, and what

were the principles by which His procedure in this matter was regulated, and might be accounted for.

It would have been much better if the defenders of the truth upon this subject had, after bringing out the meaning and import of Scripture, confined themselves simply to the object of proving, — what was all that, in strict argument, they were under any obligation to establish, —namely, that their opponents had not produced any solid proof, that the doctrine apparently taught in Scripture, concerning God's agency in regard to sinful actions extending to something beyond mere permission, warranted the conclusion that He was thus made the author of sin. It is easy enough to prove, by general considerations drawn from the nature of the subject, —its mysterious and incomprehensible character, its elevation above the reach of our faculties, its intimate connection with right conceptions of the operations of the divine mind, —that this conclusion cannot be established. And with the proof of this, which is all that the conditions of the argument require them to prove, men ought to be satisfied; as this is all that is needful to enable them to fall back again upon the simple belief of what the word of God so plainly teaches as a reality, while it affords us scarcely any materials for explaining or developing it. The objections and cavils of the enemies of truth should be disposed of in some way; but the conduct of the apostle, when he contented himself with disposing of an objection which was in substance and principle the same as this, merely by saying, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" combines with the unsatisfactory character of many of the statements of those who have attempted directly to answer such objections in much greater detail, in impressing upon us the necessity of guarding against being led by the objections of adversaries into the minute discussion of matters which he beyond the reach of our faculties, —with respect to which Scripture gives us little or no information, —and in the investigation of which, therefore, we can have no very firm ground to stand upon. Let us believe firmly, — because Scripture and reason concur in assuring us, — that every sinful action is a transgression of God's law, justly involving him that performs it in guilt and liability to punishment; and that its sinfulness proceeds wholly from the creature, and not from God, who cannot be the author or

approver of sin; but let us also believe, —because Scripture and reason likewise concur in teaching us this, —that God's providence extends to and comprehends the sins of men, and is concerned in them by something more than a mere permission, and especially in directing and overruling them for accomplishing His own purposes of justice or of mercy; and let us become the less concerned about our inability to explain fully how it is that these doctrines can be shown to harmonize with each other, by remembering, —what is very manifest, —that the one grand difficulty into which all the difficulties attending our speculations upon religious subjects ultimately run up or resolve themselves, and which attaches to every system, except atheism, is just to explain how it is that God and man, in consistency with their respective attributes, capacities, and circumstances, do, in fact, concur, combine or co-operate in producing men's actions, and in determining men's fate.

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