

deed, 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 impu-

tation 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.

Sec. IV.—*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 free-will 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

* Sess. vi., Can. iv.

† Cap. vi.

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 quæstione, et cujus gratia reliqua omnia dicuntur, quemadmodum initio propositum fuit a Luthero et aliis, ita hodie defendimus, ac ne in illis quidem, quæ dixi ad fidem non adeo necessaria esse, aliud interest, nisi quòd 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

* Calvin. De Libero Arbitrio (Tractatus, ed. 1576), p. 199.

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

* Witsius, De Econ. Fœd., Lib. iii., c. vi., sec. xii.; Maastricht, Theologia, Lib. vi., c. iii., pp. 659–663.

† C. x., sec. 2.
‡ Q. 67.

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 *συνεργεια*, or 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 Concordiæ," 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 Concordiæ" 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 throw 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 suæ initium facere, atque propriis viribus sese ad Deum convertere, et legi Dei toto corde parere valeat: tamen, si Spiritus Sanctus prædicatione verbi initium fecerit, suamque gratiam in verbo homini obtulerit, tum hominis voluntatem, propriis et naturalibus suis viribus quodammodo aliquid, licet id modicum, infirmum et languidum admodum sit, conversionem adjuvare, atque cooperari, et se ipsam ad gratiam applicare" et "præparare."

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 Concordiæ 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

* Weismanni Hist. Ecclesiast., Pars i., pp. 1536, etc.

† Formula Concordiæ, de Libero Arbitrio.

‡ Moehler's Symbolism, i., p. 128.

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

* Maastricht, Theol., Lib. vi., cap. iii., p. 666. | † Calvin. Antid. (Tractat., p. 387, ed. 1576).

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 views 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

* Moehler, Symbolism, vol. i., p. 117.

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, be-

* C. ix., sec. 4.

cause 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 to sin, and the power or freedom which thereafter it enjoys and exercises to will good as well as

* Confession, c. ix., sec. 5.

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.*

Sec. V.—God's Providence, and Man's 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

* The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, pp. 482, etc.—EDRS.

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 lie 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

* F. Paul, *Jiv. ii.*, sec. lxxx.

† *Sess. vi.*, c. xii.

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*, § 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.

* C. iv.
† Session vi., can. vi.

‡ Moehler, vol. i., p. 52.
§ Calvin. *Antid.*, in *Can.* vi., sess. vi.

As early as 1521, the Faculty of the Sorbonne charged Luther with Manichæism,* 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 Gnostico-Manichæan, 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 gratiæ 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. Bellar-

* Luther. *Op.*, tom. ii., p. 454.
† Moehler’s *Symb.*, vol. i., p. 281.

‡ Bellarm. *Opera*, tom. iv., p. 40.
Ed. 1615.

mine admits that Zwingli, 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 Scripturæ doctrinam ignorat?*" And after referring to some scriptural statements, and giving some quotations from Augustine, he adds: "*Nihil enim hic audimus quod non iisdem prope verbis, Scriptura docet. Nam et inclinandi et vertendi, obdurandi, et agendi verba illic exprimuntur.*"* The Reformers,

* Calvin, *Antid.*, in *Can.* vi., *sess.* vi.

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 re-

* Amesii Bell. *Enervat.*, tom. iv., | † West. Conf., c. v., sec. iv.
pp. 33, etc. Ed. 1629.

gard 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,* "The anger of the Lord was kindled against

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

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

* C. xxi., v. 1.