

Church of Rome to important doctrinal errors, which, though in most cases they had prevailed in the church long before, had hitherto been left free as topics of speculation, and had not been explicitly settled by any binding ecclesiastical authority.

The church had not before, in her official capacity, put tradition on a level with the written word, or thrust the apocryphal books into the canon of Scripture, or formally set up her own authority and the unanimous consent of the fathers as the standards according to which the Scripture must be interpreted. These principles had been largely acted upon in the Church of Rome, and with the most injurious effects upon the interests of sound doctrine and pure religion. But the church, as such, had not before incurred the guilt of corrupting the standard of God's truth, and trampling by a general law of universal obligation upon the ordinary rights of men in investigating it. She had, indeed, as we have already seen, required of her subjects the belief of some important doctrinal errors, which the word of God condemned, and which, consequently, a due regard to its authority should have obliged them to reject; but until after the Reformers, rejecting all human authority and mere ecclesiastical traditions in religious matters, appealed to the written word of God alone, the Church of Rome had not fully incurred the guilt of authoritatively and avowedly polluting the very fountains of divine truth, and of making the word of God of none effect.

In regard to original sin, the old decisions of the church against the Pelagians prevented the Council of Trent from going so far astray as otherwise the speculations of the schoolmen might have led them; and, accordingly, the formal symbolical doctrine of Rome upon this subject is much sounder than that of many men who have borne the name of Protestants, though she has contrived by other means to neutralize the wholesome influence which scriptural views of original sin usually exert upon men's conceptions of the whole scheme of divine truth. But the main error which the council imposed upon the belief of the church on this topic,—viz., that concupiscence in the regenerate, by which is meant very much what we commonly understand by indwelling sin, is *not* sin,—had not before received any formal ecclesiastical sanction, and that, therefore, it might be, and in point of fact was, opposed by some who continued in the Papal communion.

The doctrine of justification occupied a very prominent place

in the minds and in the writings of the Reformers. There is no doctrine of greater intrinsic importance, and there was certainly none that had been more thoroughly obscured and perverted for a very long period. Even Augustine's statements upon this point were not free from error and ambiguity; and this doctrine, as we have had occasion to observe in another connection, though the main subject of controversy in the church in the apostolic age, had never again been fully and formally discussed till the age of the Reformation: not certainly because Satan's enmity to the scriptural truth upon this important point had been mitigated, but because he had fully succeeded in condemning and burying it without controversy, and without the formal exercise of ecclesiastical authority. There was, indeed, no previous decision of the church which could be said to have formally and explicitly defined anything upon this subject; and when the Reformers brought out from God's word, and under the guidance of His Spirit, the truth upon this point, which had been buried and trampled on almost since the apostolic age, so far, at least, as concerns a correct scientific exposition of it (for we willingly admit that there were many who, with confused and erroneous speculative views upon the subject, were practically and in heart relying wholly upon the one sacrifice and the one righteousness of Christ), the Church of Rome was free,—unfettered by any previous ecclesiastical proceeding,—to have embraced and proclaimed the doctrines of Scripture regarding it. We learn from Father Paul, in his history of the Council of Trent,* that when the fathers of Trent came to consider the subject of justification, they felt themselves somewhat perplexed, because it was not a subject which they had been accustomed to discuss, as it formed no distinct head in the scholastic theology. Original sin had been largely discussed in the schools, and therefore the fathers were somewhat at home in it. But as to justification, not one of the schoolmen, as Father Paul says, had even conceived, and far less refuted, Luther's views regarding it. The fathers had therefore to proceed upon an unknown track; and as they did not take the word of God for their guide, they introduced for the first time into the formally recognised theology of the Church of Rome, statements which, though cau-

* Tome i., Livre ii., lxxv., p. 335. Courayer.

tiously and skilfully prepared, can be shown to contradict the sacred Scriptures, to misrepresent the divine method of justification, and thereby to endanger the souls of men.

The history of the sacraments in the theology of the church is similar in some respects to that of justification. Corrupt and dangerous notions as to their nature, objects, and efficacy, had been early introduced, had spread far, and done much injury to religion; but the church, as such, was just as little tied up at the period of the Reformation by formal and official decisions regarding them,—I mean, chiefly so far as concerns those general points usually discussed by theologians under the head “*de sacramentis in genere*,”—as regarding justification. But there was this important difference,—viz., that the sacraments had been very fully discussed by the schoolmen, both generally and particularly. Indeed, the doctrine of the sacraments, in the endless detail of minute speculation that has been brought to bear upon it, may be said to be very much the product of the disputations of the scholastic theologians. The fathers of Trent, therefore, were at home upon this topic; and having got over the perplexing subject of justification, they disported themselves more freely amid the inventions and speculations of the schoolmen on the subject of the sacraments, and thus introduced into the recognised theology of the church, upon mere scholastic authority, and with scarcely even a pretence to anything like the sanction of Scripture or primitive tradition, a huge mass of doctrine and ceremony,—most of which had been invented and devised during the three preceding centuries,—which the church as such had never before adopted,—and which was opposed to the teaching of the sacred Scriptures, and fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon the purity of God’s worship, the accurate exhibition of the way of salvation, and the eternal welfare of men.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COUNCIL OF TRENT.

THE Council of Trent marks a very important era in the history of the church, because, as has been often remarked, its termination,—which took place in the year 1563, the year before the death of Calvin,—virtually marks the termination of the progress of the Reformation, and the commencement of that revived efficiency of Popery which has enabled it to retain, ever since, all at least that was then left to it, and even to make some encroachments upon what the Reformation had taken from it. How far this result is to be ascribed to the Council of Trent, directly or indirectly; and in what way, if at all, it was connected with the proceedings of the council, are very interesting subjects of investigation to the philosophic student of history. But the importance of the Council of Trent, in a more directly theological point of view, depends upon the considerations, that its records embody the solemn, formal, and official decision of the Church of Rome,—which claims to be the one, holy, catholic church of Christ,—upon all the leading doctrines taught by the Reformers; that its decrees upon all doctrinal points are received by all Romanists as possessed of infallible authority; and that every Popish priest is sworn to receive, profess, and maintain everything defined and declared by it.

God was pleased, through the instrumentality of the Reformers, to revive the truths revealed in His word on the most important of all subjects, which had been long involved in obscurity and error. They were then brought fully out and pressed upon men’s attention, and the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent show us in what way the Church of Rome received and disposed of them. After full time for deliberation and preparatory discussion, she gave a solemn decision on all these important questions,—a decision to which she must by her fundamental principles unchangeably adhere, even until her eventful and most marvellous

history shall terminate in her destruction, until she shall sink like a great millstone, and be found no more at all.*

It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the decisions of the Council of Trent form the exclusive standard of the doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged; for it is but the last of eighteen general councils, all whose decisions they profess to receive as infallible, though they are not agreed among themselves as to what the eighteen councils are that are entitled to this implicit submission. Still the Reformers brought out fully at length, —though Luther attained to scriptural views on a variety of points only gradually after he had begun the work of Reformation,—all that they thought objectionable in the doctrines and practices which prevailed in the Church of Rome; and on most of these topics that church gave her decision in the Council of Trent. There were, indeed, some questions,—and these of no small importance,—on which the Council of Trent was afraid, or was not permitted, to decide. One of these was the real nature and extent of the Papal supremacy,—a subject on which, though Bellarmine says that the whole of Christianity hangs upon it, it is scarcely possible to ascertain up to this day what the precise doctrine of the Church of Rome is. The Court of Rome succeeded, in general, in managing the proceedings of the council as it chose; but it had sometimes, in the prosecution of this object, to encounter considerable difficulties, and was obliged to have recourse to bribery, intimidation, and many species of fraud and manœuvring; and even with all this, it was on several occasions not very certain beforehand as to the results of the discussions in the council on some points in which its interests were involved. On this account the Popes were afraid to allow the subject of their own supremacy to be brought into discussion; and those, whether Protestants or Papists, who wish to know the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this important subject, must go back to the Councils of Constance and Florence, and interpret and reconcile *their* decisions as they best can.

The Church of Rome, of course, can never escape from the responsibility of what was enacted and decided at Trent; but she may have incurred new and additional responsibility by subsequent decisions, even though there has not since been any occu-

* Rev. xviii. 21.

menical council. And there are additional decisions on some doctrinal points discussed in the Council of Trent, which, on principles formerly explained, are binding upon the Church of Rome, and must be taken into account in order to understand fully her doctrines upon certain questions. I refer here more particularly to the bulls of Popes Pius V. and Gregory XIII., condemning the doctrines of Baius, the precursor of Jansenius; the bull of Innocent X., condemning the five propositions of Jansenius; and the bull *Unigenitus* by Clement XI., condemning the Jansenist or Augustinian doctrines of Quesnel,—documents which contain more *explicit* evidence of the Pelagianism (taken in a historical sense) of the Church of Rome than any that is furnished by the decrees of the Council of Trent. That the bull *Unigenitus* is binding upon the Church of Rome is generally admitted, and may be said to be certain; and the obligation of the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius and Jansenius rests upon the very same grounds. This is now generally admitted by Romanists, though, at the time when these bulls were published, there were some who denied their authority, and refused to submit to them. It may be worth while to mention, as an evidence of this, that Moehler, the most skilful and accomplished defender of Popery in the present century, having, in the earlier editions of his *Symbolism*, spoken of a particular opinion in regard to the moral constitution of man before the fall as generally held by the Romish Doctors, but as not an article of faith or *de fide*, and binding upon the church; and having afterwards found,—as, indeed, he might have seen in Bellarmine,*—that the denial of the opinion in question had been condemned by Popes Pius and Gregory in their bulls against Baius, retracts his error, and asserts that the opinion must on this ground be received as a binding article of faith.†

* Bellarminus, *de Gratia primi hominis*, c. i. and v.

† Moehler's *Symbolism*, vol. i., p. 37. The bull against the errors of Baius is given in Natalis Alexander, *Hist. Eccles.*, *Sæc. xv. and xvi.*, cap. ii., art. 14; and there is an English translation of it subjoined to Buckley's translation of the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent, 1851.

There is a full account of this matter, with a discussion of the genuineness and authority of a bull of Urban VIII. in 1641, confirming the bulls of Pius and Gregory against Baius, and of the proceedings in regard to Jansenius, in Baillie's *Theologia Moralis; De Gratia Christi*, tom. v.

This incident, though intrinsically insignificant, may be regarded as relatively of some importance,—not only as showing that the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius is acknowledged to be binding upon the Church of Rome, but still more, as illustrating the *difficulty* of ascertaining what are the recognised and authoritative doctrines of that church, when such a man as Mœhler, who had been nine years a professor of theology in a celebrated German university before he published his Symbolism, fell into a blunder of this sort. But although it is certain that in order to have a full and complete view of the doctrines of the Church of Rome,—the doctrines to which that church, with all her claims to infallibility, is pledged, and for which we are entitled to hold her responsible,—we must in our investigations both go farther back, and come later down, than the Council of Trent; still it remains true, that the decrees and canons of that council furnish the readiest and most authentic means of ascertaining, *to a large extent*, what the recognised doctrines of the Church of Rome are, and exhibit the whole of the response which she gave to the chief scriptural doctrines revived by the Reformers; and this consideration has ever given, and ever must continue to give, it a most important place in the history of theology. The Romanists, of course, demand that all professing Christians, *i.e.*, all baptized persons,—for they hold that baptism, heretical or Protestant baptism, subjects all who have received it to the authority of the Pope, the head of the church,—shall receive all the decrees of the Council of Trent as infallibly true, on the ground that, like any other general œcumenical council, it was certainly guided into all truth by the presiding agency of the Holy Ghost.

The style and title which the council assumed to itself in its decrees was, “The holy (or sacrosanct) œcumenical and general Council of Trent, legitimately congregated in the Holy Ghost, and presided over by the legates of the Apostolic See.” The title which they were to assume was frequently matter of discussion in the council itself, and gave rise to a good deal of controversy and dissension. Some members of the council laboured long and zealously to effect that, to the title they assumed, there should be added the words, “representing the universal church.” This seemed very reasonable and consistent; for it is only upon the ground that general councils represent the universal church,

that that special appropriation of the scriptural promises of the presence of Christ and His Spirit, on which their alleged infallibility rests, is based. This phrase, however, was particularly unsavoury to the Popes and their legates, as it reminded them very unpleasantly of the proceedings of the Councils of Constance and Basle in the preceding century; for these councils had based, upon the ground that they represented the universal church, their great principle of the superiority of a council over a Pope, and of its right to exercise jurisdiction over him; and the Papal party succeeded, though not without difficulty, in excluding the expression.

It would, indeed, have been rather a bold step, however consistent, if the members of the Council of Trent had assumed the designation “representing the universal church;” for they were few in number, and a large proportion of them belonged to Italy,—being, indeed, just the creatures and hired agents of the Popes, and some of them having been made bishops with mere titular dioceses, just for the purpose of being sent to Trent, that they might vote as the Popes directed them. In the fourth session,—when the council passed its decrees upon the rule of faith, committing the church, for the first time, to the following positions, of some of which many learned Romanists have since been ashamed, though they did not venture openly to oppose them,—*viz.*, that unwritten traditions are of equal authority with the written word; that the apocryphal books of the Old Testament are canonical; that it belongs to the church to interpret Scripture, and that this must be done according to the unanimous consent of the fathers; and that the Vulgate Latin is to be held authentic in all controversies,—there were only about fifty bishops present, and a minority of these were opposed to some of the decisions pronounced.* During most of the sittings of the council there were not two hundred bishops present, and these were almost all Italians, with a few Germans and Spaniards; and during the last sittings, under Pope Pius IV., when the council was fuller than ever before, in consequence of the presence of some French bishops and other causes, the largest number that attended was two hundred and seventy, of whom two-thirds—one hundred and eighty-seven—were Italians, thirty-

* Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Historical Essays, Pt. ii., p. xciii.*

one Spaniards, twenty-six French, and twenty-six from all the rest of the universal church.*

If *all* œcumenical councils are infallible, and if the Council of Trent was œcumenical, and if all this can be demonstrated *a priori*, then of course we are bound to submit implicitly to all its decisions; but Protestants have generally been of opinion that there was nothing about the Council of Trent which seemed to afford anything like probable grounds for the conviction, that it was either œcumenical or infallible. It was certainly, in point of numbers, a very inadequate representative of the universal church. The men of whom it was composed had not, in general, much about them which, according to the ordinary principles of judgment, should entitle their decisions to great respect and deference. The influences under which the proceedings of the council were regulated, and the manner in which they were conducted, were not such as to inspire much confidence in the soundness of the conclusions to which they came. In short, the history of the Council of Trent is just an epitome or miniature of the history of the Church of Rome; exhibiting on the part of the Popes and their immediate adherents, and, indeed, on the part of the council itself,—for the Popes substantially succeeded in managing its affairs as they wished, though sometimes not without difficulty,—determined opposition to God's revealed will, and to the interests of truth and godliness, and a most unscrupulous prosecution of their own selfish and unworthy ends; indeed, all deceivableness of unrighteousness—the great scriptural characteristic of the mystery of iniquity. There is a very remarkable passage in Calvin's admirable treatise, "De necessitate Reformandæ Ecclesiæ," published in 1544, the year before the Council first assembled, in which he describes minutely by anticipation what the council, if it were allowed to meet, would do, how its proceedings would be conducted, and what would be the result of its deliberations; and it would not be easy to find an instance in which a prediction proceeding from ordinary human sagacity was more fully and exactly accomplished.† Abundant materials to establish its accuracy are to be found not only in Father

* Con. Trident, p. 404. Waterworth (p. ccxliii.) makes the number of prelates at the last session 255, and

this is the largest number he gives at any session.

† Tractatus, p. 62. Amstel. 1667.

Paul, but in Pallavicino himself, and in other trustworthy Romish authorities.

Hallam, in his "History of the Literature of Europe during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," has, in his great candour, made some statements about the Council of Trent, of which the Papists boast as concessions of "an eminent Protestant authority," though I really do not know that Hallam had any other claim to be called a Protestant, except that he was not a Romanist. He says,* "No general council ever contained so many persons of eminent learning and ability as that of Trent; nor is there ground for believing that any other ever investigated the questions before it with so much patience, acuteness, temper, and desire of truth. . . . Let those who have imbibed a different opinion ask themselves whether they have read Sarpi"—*i.e.*, Father Paul—"through with any attention, especially as to those sessions of the Tridentine Council which preceded its suspension in 1547;" and he intimates that he regards this view as diametrically opposed to the representations usually given of the subject by Protestants. Now, in regard to this statement of Hallam's, we have to remark, first, that there is good ground to regard it as representing the council in too favourable a light; and, secondly, that there is not at bottom *much* in it which Protestants in general have disputed, or have any interest in disputing. That the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability is undoubtedly true, and has never been questioned. The Church of Rome has almost always had some men of great learning and ability to defend its cause. That it contained at least as many men of learning and ability as any of the previous general councils,—most of them held in times when these qualifications were not particularly abundant,—may also be admitted as highly probable, if we may be allowed to except the first Council of Nice. There is no reason, however, to think, as Hallam alleges, that the Council of Trent contained *many* men of this description. There is good reason to believe that the learning and ability which existed were to be found much more among the divines and the generals of monastic orders, who were present merely as counsellors or assessors, than among the bishops, who were the only proper judges of the points that came before the council

* Hallam, vol. i., p. 540.

for decision.* It is plain, indeed, from the whole of Father Paul's history, that though there was much disputation in the council upon a great variety of topics, this was confined to a very small number of individuals,—there being apparently but few, comparatively, who were qualified to take part in the discussions. There were very few men in the Council of Trent who have been known in subsequent times for anything except their being members of that council,—very few who have acquired for themselves any distinguished or lasting reputation in theological literature.

Still, that there were men in the Council of Trent who were well acquainted with the fathers and the schoolmen, and who were able to discuss, and did discuss, the questions that came before them, with much ability and acuteness, is undeniable. Father Paul's history fully establishes this, and no Protestant, so far as I know, has ever, as Hallam seems to think, disputed it. As to the alleged patience, temper, and desire of truth with which the discussions were conducted, it is admitted that Father Paul's history does not contain a great deal that openly and palpably disproves the allegation, so far as the divines who usually took part in the discussions were concerned. And this ought to be regarded as an evidence that Father Paul did not studiously make it his object, as Romanists allege, to bring the council into contempt; for it is a curious fact that Cardinal Pallavicino, the professed advocate of the council, whose work Hallam admits † he had never read, brings out some facts, not noticed by Father Paul, which give no very favourable impression of the patience and temper of some of the fathers: as, for instance, of one bishop, in the course of a discussion, seizing another by the throat, and tearing his beard; and of the presiding legate and another cardinal who was opposed to the interests of the Pope, discharging against each other fearful torrents of Billingsgate.‡ As to their alleged desire of truth, it is of course not disputed that the fathers of the council honestly believed the doctrinal decisions which they pronounced to be true,—that where a difference of opinion appeared upon any point, they laboured to convince those who differed from them of their

* This is expressly asserted by Father Paul, the authority to whom he refers. Liv. ii., lxvi. Courayer, tome i., pp. 311-12.

† Hallam, p. 364.

‡ Pallavicin. Lib. viii., c. 6. Fleury, Liv. cxliii., sec. 56.

error, and did occasionally succeed on some minor points in producing a conviction to this effect. The theologians who guided the doctrinal decisions of the Council of Trent, no doubt represented fairly enough the theological sentiments that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome before the council assembled. Those of them who had studied theological subjects were of course acquainted with the Protestant arguments before the council was called; and the Reformers certainly did not expect that the council would make their opponents sounder theologians, or more disposed to submit to scriptural evidence, than they had been before. They appeared in the council just as they had done in their polemical writings against the Reformers; and they certainly afforded no evidence that, in virtue of the supposed presiding agency of the Holy Ghost, they either had a greater desire of truth, or actually attained it more fully than formerly.

Protestants, then, do not dispute that the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability; that the doctrinal decisions of the council were in accordance with what the great body of its members really believed to be true; and that considerable pains were taken to put forth their doctrines in the most unobjectionable and plausible form. The leading general statement which Protestants are accustomed to make in regard to the Council of Trent, so far as this aspect of it is concerned, is in substance this,—that there is nothing about it that entitles its decisions to any great respect or deference; and the main grounds upon which they hold this conviction are these:—that its members were few in number, viewed as representing the universal church; that they were not, *in general*, men at all distinguished for piety, learning, and ability; that, on the contrary, the great body of them were grossly and notoriously deficient in those qualities; that a large proportion of them were the mere creatures of the Pope, ready to vote for whatever he might wish; that the general management of the proceedings of the council was regulated by the Court of Rome, with a view to the promotion of its own selfish interests; that when difficulties arose upon any points in which these interests were, or were supposed to be, involved, all means, foul or fair, were employed to protect them; and that such was the skill of those who, in the Pope's name, presided over the council, and such the character and the motives of the majority of those who composed it,—that *these* means, directed to *this* end,

seldom if ever failed of success. *All this* has been established by the most satisfactory historical evidence; and when this has been proved, it is abundantly sufficient to warrant the conclusion, that the decisions of such a body, so composed, so circumstanced, so influenced, are entitled to but little respect; that there is no very strong antecedent presumption in favour of their soundness; and that they may be examined and tested with all freedom, and without any overpowering sense of the sacredness of the ground on which we are treading.

The two main objects for which the council was professedly called, were,—to decide on the theological questions which had been raised by the Reformers, and to reform the practical corruptions and abuses which it was admitted prevailed in the Church of Rome itself; and its proceedings are divided into two heads,—doctrine and reformation,—the latter forming much the larger portion of its recorded proceedings. It was chiefly on the topics connected with the reformation of the church that the influence of the Pope was brought to bear,—for it was these chiefly that affected his interests; and it was mainly the proceedings upon some of the subjects that rank under this head, which brought out the true character of the men of whom the council was composed, and the influences under which its proceedings were conducted. The Popes were not much concerned about the precise deliverances that might be given upon points of doctrine, except indeed those which might bear upon the government of the church. Upon other doctrinal subjects, it was enough for them to be satisfied that, from the known sentiments of the members of which the council was composed, their decisions would be in opposition to all the leading principles advanced by the Reformers, and in accordance with the theological views that then generally prevailed in the Church of Rome. Satisfied of this, and not caring much more about the matter, the Popes left the theologians of the council to follow very much their own convictions and impressions upon questions purely doctrinal; and this gave to the discussions upon these topics a degree of freedom and independence, which, had any unworthy interests of the Court of Rome been involved in them, would most certainly have been checked.

The accounts given by Father Paul of the discussions that took place in the council upon doctrinal subjects are very interesting and important, as throwing much light both upon the general state

of theological sentiment that then obtained in the Church of Rome, and also upon the meaning and objects of the decrees and canons which were ultimately adopted; and, indeed, a perusal of them may be regarded as almost indispensable to a *thorough* and minute acquaintance with the theology of the Church of Rome as settled by the Council of Trent. There are two interesting considerations of a general kind which they suggest, neither of them very accordant with “the desire of truth” which Hallam is pleased to ascribe to the council,—first, that the diversity of opinion on important questions, elicited in the discussion, was sometimes so great as apparently to preclude the possibility of their coming to a harmonious decision, which yet seems somehow to have been generally effected; and, secondly, that a considerable number of the doctrines broached and maintained by the Reformers were supported by some members at least in substance, although it seems in general to have been received *by the great body of the council* as quite a sufficient argument against the truth of a doctrine, that it was maintained by the Protestants. The great objects which the council seems to have kept in view in their doctrinal or theological decisions were these,—first, to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers as full and complete as possible; and, secondly, to avoid as much as they could condemning any of those doctrines which had been matter of controversial discussion among the scholastic theologians, and on which difference of opinion still subsisted among themselves. It was not always easy to combine these objects; and the consequence is, that on many points the decisions of the Council of Trent are expressed with deliberate and intentional ambiguity. The truth of this position is established at once by an examination of the decrees and canons themselves, and by the history both of the discussions which preceded their formation, and of the disputes to which they have since given rise in the Church of Rome itself. It was probably this, with the awkward consequences to which it was seen that it was likely to lead, that induced Pope Pius IV., in his bull confirming the council, to forbid all, even ecclesiastical persons, of whatever order, condition, or degree, upon any pretext whatever, and under the severest penalties, to publish any commentaries, glosses, annotations, scholia, or any sort of interpretation upon the decrees of the council, without Papal authority; while, at the same time, he directed that, if any one found anything in the

decrees that was obscure, or needed explanation, he should go up to the place which the Lord had chosen,—the Apostolic See, the mistress of all the faithful.

It cannot be denied that a great deal of skill and ingenuity were displayed in the preparation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and that advantage had been taken of the discussions which had taken place since the commencement of the Reformation to introduce greater care and caution into the statement and exposition of doctrine, and thus ward off the force of some of the arguments of the Reformers. There is certainly not nearly so much Pelagianism in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent,—so much of what plainly and palpably contradicts the fundamental doctrines of Scripture,—as appears in the writings of the earlier Romish opponents of Luther, though there is enough to entitle us to charge the Church of Rome with perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and subverting the scriptural method of salvation.

The canons of the council, as distinguished from the decrees, consist wholly of anathemas against the doctrines ascribed to the Reformers. And here a good deal of unfairness has been practised: advantage has been taken, to a considerable extent, of some of the rash, exaggerated, and paradoxical statements of Luther, much in the same way as in the first bull of Pope Leo condemning him; and in this way statements are, with some appearance of authority, ascribed to Protestants which they do not acknowledge, for which they are not responsible, and which are not at all necessary for the exposition and maintenance of their principles. Leo, in his bull, which was directed avowedly against Luther by name, might be entitled to take up any statement that he had made; and Luther did not complain, in regard to any one of the statements charged upon him, that he had not made it. But it was unfair in the Council of Trent to take advantage of Luther's rash and unguarded statements, for exciting odium against Protestants in general, who had now explained their doctrines with care and accuracy.

A further artifice resorted to by the Council of Trent in their canons condemning Protestant doctrines, is to take a doctrine which Protestants generally held and acknowledged,—to couple it with some one of the more extreme and exaggerated statements of Luther or of some one else,—and then to include them both

under one and the same anathema, evidently for the purpose of laying the odium of the more objectionable statements upon the other which accompanied it. Some of these observations we may afterwards have occasion to illustrate by examples; but our object at present is merely to give a brief summary of the leading general points that should be remembered concerning the decrees and canons of the council, and kept in view and applied in the investigation of them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE FALL.

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

Sec. I.—Popish and Protestant Views.

The phrase Original Sin,—*peccatum originis*, or *peccatum originale*,—is used by theologians in two different senses; the things, however, described by it in the two cases differing from each other only as a part does from a whole, and the words, consequently, being used either in a more extended or in a more restricted sense. Sometimes the phrase is employed as a general comprehensive description of all the different elements or ingredients that constitute the sinfulness of the state into which man, through Adam's transgression, fell; and sometimes as denoting only the moral corruption or depravity of his nature, the inherent and universal bias or tendency of man, as he comes into the world, to violate God's laws, which, being the immediate or proximate cause of all actual transgressions, constitutes practically the most important and fundamental feature of his natural condition of sinfulness. It is in this latter and more restricted sense

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

The subject of the moral character and condition of man, both before and after the fall,—treated commonly by modern continental writers under the designation of Anthropology,—was very fully discussed by the schoolmen; and in their hands the doctrine of Scripture, as expounded by Augustine, had been very greatly corrupted, and the real effects of the fall—the sinfulness of man's natural condition—had been very much explained away. The doctrine which was generally taught in the Church of Rome, at the commencement of the Reformation, upon this subject, the Reformers condemned as unscriptural,—as Pelagian in its character,—as tending towards rendering the work of Christ, and the whole arrangements of the scheme of redemption, unnecessary and superfluous,—and as laying a foundation for men's either effecting their own salvation, or at least *meriting* at God's hand the grace that is necessary for accomplishing this result. And

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

Their decree upon this subject consists of five sections, of which the first three are directed only against the Pelagians, and are acknowledged by Protestants to contain scriptural truth, so far as they go,—though they are defective and somewhat ambiguous; the fourth is directed against the Anabaptists; while the fifth alone strikes upon any position which had been generally maintained by the Reformers, and is still generally held by Protestant churches. The Protestants exposed the unreasonableness and folly of the council beginning its doctrinal decisions with a condemnation of heresies which had been condemned by the church for above a thousand years; and which, except in the article of the denial of infant baptism, had not been revived by any in the course of those theological discussions on which the council was avowedly called upon to decide. “*Quorsum obsecro,*”

says Calvin upon this very point,—for we have the privilege of having from his pen what he calls an “*Antidote*” to the proceedings of the first seven sessions of the council, those held under Paul III., a work of very great interest and value,—“*Quorsum obsecro attinebat tot anathemata detonare, nisi ut imperiti crederent aliquid subesse causæ cum tamen nihil sit.*” Although Protestants have admitted that the first four sections of the decree of the Council of Trent are sound and scriptural, so far as they go, and could be rejected, in substance at least, only by Pelagians and Anabaptists, they have usually complained of them as giving a very defective account, or more properly on account at all, of the real nature and constituent elements of original sin, or rather of the sinfulness of man's natural condition in consequence of the fall. This complaint is undoubtedly well founded; and the true reason why the subject was left in this very loose and unsatisfactory condition was, that a considerable diversity of opinion upon these points prevailed in the council itself, and the fathers were afraid to give any deliverance regarding them. Indeed, upon this very occasion, Father Paul,*—from whose narrative Hallam, as we have seen, formed so favourable an opinion of the ability and learning of the council, and of the desire of truth by which its members were actuated,—tells us that, while some members strongly urged that it was unworthy of a general council to put forth a mere condemnation of errors upon so important a subject, without an explicit statement of the opposite truths, the generality of the bishops (few of whom, he says, were skilled in theology) were not able to comprehend the discussions in which the theologians indulged in their presence, about the nature and constituent elements of men's natural condition of sinfulness, and were very anxious that the decrees should contain a mere rejection of errors, without a positive statement of truth, and should be expressed in such vague and general terms as should contain no deliverance upon these knotty points, lest they should do mischief by their decision, without being aware of it. So that it would seem that the honest ignorance and stupidity of the great body of the members of the council contributed, as well as reasons of policy, to the formation of the decree upon original sin, in the vague and unsatisfactory form in which we find it.

* Father Paul, Liv. ii., sec. lxvi., pp. 311, 312.

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

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

* Liv. ii., sec. lxiii., pp. 300, 301.

ferences deducible from man's natural state of sinfulness, which bore more directly upon the topics of free-will, grace, and merit; though it is also true, as I have already observed, that the fathers of Trent had before them certain doctrines taught by the Reformers, in regard to the nature of original sin, which they thought proper to pass by, without either approving or condemning them.

It came out, however, in the course of subsequent discussions, that certain corrupt notions in regard to original sin, which had been held by some of the schoolmen, but which *seemed* to be condemned, by implication at least, by the Council of Trent, were still taught by leading Popish divines, who contended that the council had intentionally abstained from deciding these questions—had used vague and general words on purpose—and had thus left free room for speculation and difference of opinion; and Protestant theologians were thus led to see that, even for the maintenance of the practical conclusions bearing upon the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit,—about which the Reformers were chiefly concerned,—a more minute and exact exposition of the nature and constituent elements of original sin was necessary. This, together with the discussions excited by the Synergistic controversy in the Lutheran church, and by the entire denial of original sin by the Socinians, towards the end of the sixteenth century, led to a fuller and more detailed investigation of the subject by Protestant divines, and produced those more minute and precise expositions of the real nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness, which are fully set forth in the writings of the great theologians of the seventeenth century,—which have since been generally embraced by orthodox churches,—and which the compilers of our standards regarded as so important, that they embodied them even in the *Shorter Catechism*, among the fundamental articles of Christian doctrine. There, the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell is declared to consist “in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which (*viz.*, the corruption of nature) is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.” As this doctrine, in substance, though certainly not so precisely and definitely expressed, was under the view of the Council of Trent, as having been taught by the Reformers,—and as one leading defect of the

decree they adopted was, that it gave no explicit deliverance regarding it,—it is in entire accordance with our present object, and may not be unprofitable, to make a few explanatory observations upon this view of the nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness introduced by the fall.

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

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

It is true, indeed, that, in a synthetic exposition of men's natural estate of sin, the attention would naturally be directed, in the first place, to the actual personal moral character and tendencies of men as they come into the world, and to the actual transgressions of God's law, of which they are all guilty,—a subject which is not so entirely one of pure revelation, on which a variety of evidence from different sources can be brought to bear, and in the investigation of which an appeal can be made for materials of proof more directly to men's own consciousness, and to experience and observation. But when the actual corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, as certainly resulting from this feature of their natural character, are established from Scripture, consciousness, and experience, it must be evident that the doctrine that, in virtue of God's arrangements, the human race was federally represented by Adam, and was tried in him,—so that the guilt of his first sin is imputed to them, and they are in consequence re-

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

The imputation of the guilt or *reatus* of Adam's first sin to his posterity, as the basis and ground in fact, and the explanation or *rationale pro tanto* in speculative discussion, of their being involved in actual depravity, misery, and ruin, through his fall, was certainly not denied by the Council of Trent. On the contrary, it seems to be fairly implied or assumed in their decree, though it cannot be said to be very explicitly asserted. Indeed, the position which this doctrine held at that time in controversial discussion, was materially different from that which it has generally occupied at subsequent periods; and some explanation of this point is necessary, in order to our understanding and estimating aright the statements of some of the Reformers on this subject. An impression generally prevails amongst us,—countenanced, perhaps, to a certain extent, by some of the aspects which the controversy on this subject has occasionally assumed in modern times,—that the

doctrine that men are involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin,—that that sin was imputed to his posterity,—is the highest point of ultra-Calvinism,—a doctrine which the more moderate and reasonable Calvinists—including, it is often alleged, Calvin himself—rejected; and that it is the darkest and most mysterious view that has ever been presented of men's moral condition by nature; while yet the fact is certain, that, at the time of the Reformation, this doctrine was held by many Romanists,—by some of the theologians of the Council of Trent, who were not Calvinists,—and that it was applied by them for the purpose of softening and mitigating, or rather of explaining away, the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

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

and account of it. The final appeal, of course, must be made to Scripture: the question must be decided by ascertaining whether or not the word of God teaches the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and on this we are not called upon here to enlarge. But there is certainly nothing more awful, or mysterious, or incomprehensible, in the one doctrine than in the other; and there is no ground whatever why the rejection of the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, as distinguished from that of their universal moral depravity as an actual feature in their condition, should be held to indicate, as many seem to suppose it does, moderation and caution, or an aversion to presumptuous and dangerous speculations.*

The Council of Trent, though not giving any very explicit deliverance upon this subject, has at least left it free to Romanists to profess and maintain, if they choose, the views in regard to the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity which have been usually held by Calvinistic divines; and those Romish theologians who have made the nearest approach to sound Protestant doctrine upon other points, have uniformly spoken very much like Calvinists upon this point. Even Cardinal Bellarmine, though he showed no leaning to the comparatively sound theology taught in his own time by Baius, and more fully in the seventeenth century by Jansenius, has laid down positions upon this department of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which contain the whole substance of what the strictest Calvinists usually contend for. He expressly asserts that the first sin of Adam, “*omnibus imputatur, qui ex Adamo nascuntur, quoniam omnes in lumbis Adami existentes in eo, et per eum peccavimus, cum ipse peccavit;*” and again, “*in omnibus nobis, cum primum homines esse incipimus, præter imputationem inobedientiæ Adami, esse etiam similem perversionem, et obliquitatem unicuique inhærentem.*” Upon the assumption of taking *peccatum* to mean an actual transgression of God's law, he would define the original sin of mankind to be “*prima Adami inobediencia, ab ipso Adamo commissa, non ut erat singularis persona, sed ut personam totius generis humani gerebat;*” and, lastly, he makes the following very important statement, most fully confirming one of the leading positions which we have endeavoured to illustrate:—“*Nisi*

* See “The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation,” p. 377.—EDRS.