

is good, or can of itself produce or elicit anything good. Our Saviour has said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and in saying so He has laid down a great principle, which, viewed in connection with what can be shown to be the ordinary meaning of "the flesh" in Scripture, just amounts in substance to this, that corrupt human nature, as it is and by itself, can produce nothing but what is corrupt; and He asserted the same general principle with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when He said, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

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

Men are very apt, when they read such statements in the

\* Rom. vii. 18.

† Rom. viii. 7, 8.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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

Romanists, and others who adopt similar views upon this subject, usually content themselves with the general statement, that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial; endeavouring to defend this general position by bringing out what they allege it is necessary for men to have, in order to their being responsible, without in general attempting to define how far the corruption goes and where it stops, or to mark out what there is of good that still characterizes fallen and unrenewed men. They do not usually dispute absolutely, or as a general position, that man by his fall forfeited and lost the image of God;

but they commonly assert that some traces or features of this image still remained,—a position which Protestants in a certain sense admit; and some of them, as Bellarmine,\* have attempted to give plausibility and definiteness to this notion, or rather have retracted or explained away the concession that man has lost the image of God, by inventing a distinction, which has no foundation in Scripture, between the *image* of God and the *likeness* of God; and asserting that man has lost the latter, the likeness, but not the former, the image. Moehler admits that this position is fairly involved in the doctrine of the Council of Trent,—viz., that “fallen man still bears the image of God;” and he professes† to give great credit to Calvin for teaching a more rational and Catholic doctrine with respect to the natural condition of man than Luther, by admitting that the image of God in man was not wholly obliterated. He represents Luther as the more erroneous and extravagant, but, at the same time, the more consistent in his views upon this subject, and describes Calvin as only involving himself in confusion and inconsistency by the partially sounder views which he entertained in regard to the remains of the divine image in fallen men. In order to lay a plausible ground for these allegations, Moehler perverts the views both of Luther and Calvin, and their respective followers, upon this subject, bending them in opposite directions, and thus increasing the apparent discrepancy between them. He represents Luther as denying the existence in fallen man of any religious or moral capacities or faculties, as if he had become literally like a stock or a stone, or an irrational animal,—an imputation which has no fair and solid foundation, though it may have some apparent countenance in one or two rash and incautious expressions; and he represents Calvin as admitting the existence of remains of the divine image in fallen man in such a sense as to be inconsistent with his total depravity.

But the truth is, that Calvin manifested no inconsistency either with Luther, or with himself, in treating of this subject. Calvin did not admit that traces and remains of the divine image were to be found in fallen man in any sense which, either in his own apprehension or *in the nature and truth of the case*, was in the least inconsistent with maintaining the *entire* depravity of human

\* Moehler's Symbolism, vol. i., p. 65.

† Moehler, vol. i., pp. 103-109.

nature, or the absence of all that was really good in unrenewed men, and the utter sinfulness of all their actions. The only difference between Luther and Calvin upon this subject lies in what we have repeatedly had occasion to advert to,—viz., that Luther not unfrequently indulged in strong and paradoxical language, without paying due regard to the exact import of his expressions; while Calvin's wonderful perspicacity, and soundness, and comprehensiveness of judgment, communicated in general to his statements an exactness and precision to which Luther never attained. The remains of the divine image which Calvin admitted were still to be found in fallen man, consisted not in any actual remaining tendency to what was truly good, nor in the possible realization by his own strength, and through the mere operation of his natural principles, of any knowledge, righteousness, or holiness, which was really in accordance with what God required of him; but chiefly in the general structure of his mental faculties,—in those natural capacities of acquiring a knowledge of truth and God, and loving and serving Him, which constitute Him, in contradistinction to the lower animals, a rational, and in a certain sense, a religious being, and make him a proper subject, a suitable recipient, of those gracious operations of the divine Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth, by which he may be renewed, or made over again, after God's image. In this sense Calvin admitted, and so have Protestant divines in general, that fallen man retains features of the divine image—which plainly enough indicate the high place originally assigned to him in the creation,—in his relation to God, his intrinsic fitness or subjective capacity, in virtue of his mental and moral constitution, for acting suitably to that relation, and of course the possibility of his being again enabled to do so, without an entire reconstruction of the general framework of his mental constitution and faculties, though not without most important changes which God's gracious power alone can effect. In this sense, but in no other, man may be said to retain the traces or remains of the image of God; but there is nothing in all this in the least inconsistent with what Calvin and Protestants in general have regarded as clearly taught in Scripture with respect to the total depravity of human nature,—man's natural want of any actual available capacity in himself for what is truly good,—and the consequent sinfulness of all his actions, of all the actual outgoings of his natural principles, until he is re-

newed by God's grace in the spirit of his mind. That this was Calvin's mind upon the subject, is perfectly plain from repeated and explicit statements,—nay, even from those quoted by Moehler himself, in support of the account he gives of Calvin's doctrine: "Quin Adam, ubi excidit e gradu suo, hâc defectione a Deo alienatus sit, minime dubium est. Quare etsi demus non prorsus exinamitam ac deletam in eo fuisse Dei imaginem, sic tamen corrupta fuit, ut quicquid superest, horrenda sit deformitas. . . . Ergo quum Dei imago sit integra naturæ humanæ præstantia, quæ refulsit in Adam ante defectionem, postea sic vitiata et prope deleta, ut nihil ex ruinâ nisi confusum, mutilum, labeque infectum supersit." \*

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

\* Calvin. Lib. i., c. xv., sec. 4. Moehler, vol. i., p. 104.

right end—the glory of God, then it is manifestly impossible to prove that any actions, whether of a moral or a religious kind, that were truly good, have ever been performed by any but men of whom there was every competent reason to believe that they had been born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.

The doctrine, then, taught by the Reformers, and anathematized by the Council of Trent,—that works done before justification, and of course all the actions of unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure and condemnation of God,—is clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, and ought to be laid down as a fixed principle in all our investigations into the way and manner in which men are delivered from their natural condition of guilt and depravity, affording as it does a sufficient proof that there can be no such thing as what Popish theologians usually call merit of congruity, or *meritum de congruo*,—i.e., a superior measure of antecedent moral worth and excellence, rendering some men more congruous or suitable recipients of divine grace than others; and that the origin of all that is truly good in men, and really bears with a favourable influence upon their salvation, must be traced to the special grace or favour of God in Christ, and to the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit.

Dr Chalmers has discussed very fully, upon a variety of occasions, the right mode of stating and enforcing,—especially with a view to the conviction of irreligious men,—the true moral character and condition of those who have not yet received the grace of God; and has brought forward upon this subject some views of great practical value and importance. He has more particularly laboured to show the propriety and desirableness, with a view to producing a practical impression on the understandings and consciences of irreligious men, of fully admitting the important differences that may be observed in them in regard to integrity, benevolence, generosity, and similar qualities, and in regard to the discharge of social and domestic duties; and urged strenuously the importance of chiefly enforcing upon them, with a view to their conviction, the *ungodliness* with which they are all, and all equally, chargeable; while he has presented some very striking portraits of the extent to which qualities and conduct,—amiable and useful, well fitted to call forth respect and esteem,—may exist without anything resulting from a right sense of men's relation to

God, and of the duty they owe to Him. In his very important and interesting exposition of these topics, he was not called upon to advert to those views of the subject which I have had occasion to explain; and he has, in consequence, been led to make some statements which might seem at first sight scarcely reconcilable with the position I have endeavoured to illustrate. There is, however, no real discrepancy,—any apparent discrepancy arising solely from the different aspects in which the subject has been contemplated, and the different purposes to which it has been applied. I entirely concur in all the positions Dr Chalmers has laid down upon the subject, though I do not approve of all his phraseology, and especially doubt the propriety of calling anything in the character of unrenewed men *good*, absolutely or without explanation, when the apostle has so expressly asserted that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing; or of applying this epithet, or any synonymous one, to any actions which do not correspond with the description of good works that has been quoted from our Confession of Faith.

*Sec. VII.—Sinfulness of Works after Regeneration.*

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

It is of course not denied that there is something,—nay, much,—that is really good, or really accordant with the requirements of God's law, in men who have been born again. Their hearts have been purified by faith; their actions are, to a considerable extent, really regulated by the right standard,—the word of God,—and directed to a right end,—the promotion of His glory. They are dwelt in by the Spirit of God, who works in them; and the results of His operation,—*so far as they are His*,—must be good. They have been created again in Christ Jesus unto good works, and they walk in them. All this is true; but it is also true, that even they are daily breaking God's commandments in thought, word,

and deed; and that their actions, even the best of them, are stained with imperfection and sin. Luther, on this point, as well as on that formerly discussed, had made some rash and incautious statements, and it has ever since been the general practice of Popish writers to misrepresent Protestants by charging them with maintaining that there are no good works performed even by regenerate men, but that all their actions are mortal sins. This is an inaccurate and unfair representation of the Protestant doctrine, although some of Luther's statements may have given it some apparent countenance. Protestants do not dispute that renewed men, out of the good treasure of their hearts, bring forth good things; that they perform actions which are called good in the word of God, and of course are good, even when tried by the scriptural standard. What they contend for is, that even renewed men have also something about them that is evil; and that all their actions, even the best of them, though good in the main, have got about them something sinful and defective, and come so far short of what the law of God requires, that, when viewed simply in themselves, and tried by that high and holy standard, they must be pronounced to be sinful, and, so far as intrinsic merit is concerned, to deserve, *not* reward, but punishment.\*

The Council of Trent † anathematizes “any who say that a righteous man, in every good work, sins at least venially, or, what is more intolerable, mortally, and therefore deserves eternal punishment; and that he is not condemned only because God does not impute these works to his condemnation.” Now, Protestants do not admit, but, on the contrary, utterly deny, the Popish distinction between mortal and venial sins, so far as concerns their proper nature and intrinsic demerit; and it is, of course, unwarrantable and unfair to ascribe to them, directly or by implication, the use or employment of such a distinction. They believe that every sin,—*i.e.*, any want of conformity unto, or transgression of,

\* This point is exceedingly well stated, and the real meaning of Luther and the Reformers regarding it is very clearly and accurately explained, in the following extract from Bishop Davenant's *Prælectiones de Justitia Habituali et Actuali*: “Nunc illud unum addemus, Lutherum aliosque nostris, qui dixerint renatos in quovis opere bono peccare mortaliter; nihil aliud

voluisse, quam illos in optimis suis operibus non implere perfectionem legis, sed admiscere aliquem defectum, qui habet rationem peccati, et per consequens, induceret reatum mortis apud districtum judicem, si persona operans a beneficio Mediatoris et misericordiæ excluderetur.”—*Cantab.* 1631, p. 435.

† Sess. vi., can. xxv.

the law of God,—is in its own nature mortal, and deserving of God's wrath and curse; and might, when viewed by itself, and apart from God's revealed purposes and arrangements, and His previous actual dealings and engagements with men, be, without any injustice, made the ground of a sentence of condemnation. If, then, any of them should assert that the sin which they ascribe to all the good works, even of righteous or regenerate men, is not venial but mortal sin, they must mean by this nothing more than that it is truly sin, and not a mere defect or infirmity which need not be much regarded, as it does not imply a real transgression of, or want of conformity to, the requirements of God's law; and there is a sense in which Protestants do not regard the good works of regenerate persons, though polluted with sin, as mortal sins,—viz., if respect be had to their actual effects, and not to their intrinsic nature and demerit. Regenerate persons have been justified and admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour,—they have been adopted into His family, and they are regarded and treated by Him as His children. They are in Christ Jesus, and there is now no condemnation for them. Their sins are not now imputed to them or charged against them, to their condemnation, and do not, in point of fact, subject them to death and the curse of God. But if there be anything about them, in their character, principles, motives, or actions, which is really sinful, then they must *deserve* condemnation; and if they are not, in point of fact, subjected to it, then this must be, in spite of the anathema of the Council of Trent, *because* it is not imputed to them, or put down to their account,—charged against them with a view to their being condemned.

Another injustice commonly practised by Romish writers,—though not, it must be admitted, by the Council of Trent,—in explaining the state of the question upon this subject, is to represent Protestants as maintaining the general position, that the good works of righteous or regenerate men are mortal sins, and at the same time to insinuate that Protestants give this as the true and proper description of them. Now, Protestants do not deny that all regenerate men perform good works, and they admit that good works are good works, and should be so described. Of course they cannot be both good works and sins in the same respect; but it is quite possible that they may be, and therefore may be justly called, good, as being to a large extent, and with respect to their

leading distinguishing characteristics, good, accordant with God's commandments; and yet may in some way so come short of the requirements of the divine law as to be chargeable with sin, so that they may truly be said to be sins. When the question, indeed, is put generally and indefinitely, What they are? they should be described according to their leading and most palpable characters; and the answer to the question should just be, that they are good works. But if it be true also that there is something sinful about them, then the assertion that they are good works, though it be the true and proper answer to the question, What are they? does not contain the whole truth,—does not give a full and complete description of them; and of course this additional important element requires to be introduced.

Protestants, then, do not give it as the true and proper description of the good works of regenerate men, *that they are sins*, though this is the way in which the matter is usually represented by Bellarmine and other Popish controversialists. They say that they are good works; but finding, as they believe, abundant evidence in Scripture that they have all something sinful about them, they think they may also, without any impropriety, be called sins; not as if this was their leading primary character,—that by which they should be ordinarily and directly denominated,—but simply as being one true and real feature that ought to enter into a full description of them, inasmuch as, notwithstanding their substantial goodness or accordance with the requirements of God's law, they are also stained or polluted with what is sinful, and, therefore, in its own nature deserving of condemnation. The Council of Trent has not formally and precisely laid down, in a direct and positive form, the doctrine which it intended to teach in opposition to that which it anathematized in the canon above quoted; but by anathematizing the position that a righteous man sins in every good work,—by maintaining that a regenerate man is able in this life to fulfil the whole law of God, and to merit or deserve by his good works increase of grace and eternal life,—they fully warrant us in ascribing to the Church of Rome, as one of its recognised and binding doctrines, the position,—that men in this life may be entirely free from sin, and may and do perform actions which are not stained or polluted with anything sinful, or really deserving of condemnation attaching to them. Now, the opposite doctrine,—viz., that even regenerate

men have all something sinful about them, and that even their good works are all stained or polluted with an admixture of sin attaching to them,—was maintained by all the Reformers, and was strongly urged by them as overturning from the foundation the notions that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome about the merit of good works.

The subject divides itself into two parts,—the first including the moral constitution of renewed men, as comprehending their tendencies, affections, and incipient desires; and the second their actual motives and completed actions. In regard to the first of these parts or divisions of the subject, the question in dispute is identical with that which we discussed when examining the decree of the Council of Trent on original sin, and showing, in opposition to its decision, that baptism or regeneration does not wholly remove original corruption or depravity, and that concupiscence in the regenerate, as it was then explained, is sin. This point is of essential importance in regard to the whole question; and, indeed, it may be said to determine it: for if concupiscence, which is allowed to remain in the regenerate, is sin, as the Council of Trent admits that the Apostle Paul calls it, it must stain with an admixture of sinful pollution all the actions which they perform, until they have entirely escaped from the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. And Bellarmine accordingly admits that it is needful to the successful maintenance of the Popish doctrine, that the good works of regenerate men are not certainly and universally polluted with what is sinful, to remove out of the way the alleged sinfulness of concupiscence, and to show that it is not a sin, but only an infirmity or defect.\*

As, however, we have already considered fully this subject of the sinfulness of concupiscence, we need not now dwell upon it at greater length, but may proceed to advert to the second branch of the subject,—viz', the actual motives and the completed actions of regenerate men; the actual motives differing from concupiscence, as including the first risings or motions of desires directed towards what is evil or unlawful, in this, that they are deliberately cherished in the mind, that they are fully consented to, and are necessarily connected with the outward actions of which they form the true proximate causes, and of which they determine the

\* Bellarmin. De Justif., Lib. iv., c. xvii.

moral character. The direct Scripture proofs usually adduced by Romanists in support of the doctrine of their Church upon this point, are taken from those passages of Scripture which describe some men as perfectly blameless and pleasing to God, and their actions as good works, conformable to His law and acceptable in His sight, and those in which some of the saints appeal to, and plead, their own innocence and righteousness. There is, however, no statement in Scripture which clearly and definitely teaches, directly or by necessary consequence, that any man ever existed upon earth in a condition in which he had not something sinful about him, or ever performed an action which was free from an admixture of sinful pollution. Some of the scriptural statements to which Romanists refer in discussing this subject, might seem to warrant their conclusion, if there was no more information given us in Scripture regarding it than what is contained in them. But,—as we had occasion to remark before upon a similar topic, when considering the alleged effects of baptism or regeneration upon original corruption, and establishing the sinfulness of concupiscence,—they do not bear so directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute as to preclude the competence of producing, or even to make it unlikely that there may be actually produced, from other parts of Scripture, evidence that even the good works of regenerate men are stained with sinful pollution. At the most, these general statements about perfection, innocence, and good works, pleasing to God, etc., can have the effect only of throwing the *onus probandi* upon those who deny that the good works of regenerate men are wholly free from sin; and any further use or application of them, in the first instance, should be the more carefully guarded against, because the general tendency of men is to overrate their own excellence, and because the general tendency of the leading views presented in the word of God is to counteract this natural tendency of men. Our duty is to ascertain the *whole* of what God's word teaches upon every subject on which it touches, and to receive every doctrine which it inculcates as resting upon divine authority. We can be said to know the word of God upon any topic only when we have accurately ascertained the meaning and import of *all* that He has stated or indicated in His word regarding it, and when we have combined the different portions of information given us there—admitting each of them in its due order and connection—into the

general view which we lay down of the whole subject to which they relate.

Some instances there are, in which, when we collect together and combine into a general statement or doctrine the whole of the different portions of the information which the word of God furnishes upon some particular topic, we find it difficult to comprehend how the different truths or portions of truth which enter into the general doctrine can consist with each other or be brought into harmonious combination. But we must be careful of imagining that this of itself affords any sufficient reason for rejecting any one of them,—a notion which virtually assumes that our faculties, or powers of distinct comprehension, constitute the measure or standard of what is true or possible. If it can be shown from Scripture that the good works of regenerate men are still stained by some admixture of what is sinful, then this must be received as a portion of what Scripture teaches regarding them; it must enter into anything like a full statement of the Scripture doctrine upon the subject; and it must be allowed to explain or modify somewhat those general and indefinite statements about perfection and innocence, goodness and acceptableness, which, had no such doctrine been *also* taught in Scripture, might have seemed to point to a different conclusion. It is quite possible that the actions may be good and acceptable in their general character and leading features, so as to be rightly denominated, ordinarily and generally, by these terms, though it may be also true that they are not wholly free from sinful imperfection or pollution. They may have comparative or relative, though not unqualified or absolute, perfection and innocence; and this, indeed, is the only way in which the *whole* doctrine taught in God's word regarding them can be consistently and harmoniously embodied in a doctrinal statement. And it is remarkable that most of the arguments which Bellarmine founds upon the scriptural passages he adduces in support of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, require as their medium of probation, as the intervening idea through which alone they can be made to bear upon the point in dispute, *that* unfair misrepresentation of the proper *status questionis* which I have already exposed.

For instance, having adduced those passages which undoubtedly speak of the good works of regenerate persons, as

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

The Church of Rome, then, can produce no sufficient evidence from Scripture in support of the doctrine which it teaches. Let us now briefly advert to the scriptural grounds on which the Protestant doctrine rests, without, however, attempting anything like a full exposition of them. The statements made by the Apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans are sufficient, not only to prove the proper sinfulness of concupiscence, —although, as we have observed, the proof of the proper sinfulness of concupiscence is sufficient of itself to prove that there is some sinful admixture about all the actions of regenerate men,—

\* Bellarmin., De Justificat., Lib. iv., cap. xv.; opera, tom. iv.

but also to prove more directly the sinful deficiency and imperfection of all the actions which he performed,—and more especially his statements, “That which I do I allow not : for what I would, that I do not ; but what I hate, that I do ;” and, “To will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”\* The force of this statement, so far as concerns the point now under consideration, lies very much in the word *κατεργάζεσθαι*, which means to work out thoroughly, or to carry a work out to completeness and perfection ; and if the apostle, even when his will was to do good, did not find that he could even attain to completeness or perfection in his strivings after conformity to what God requires, this is the same thing as telling us that all his good works had still something sinful, or sinfully defective, attaching to them, and polluting them. The same conclusion is established by what we are taught in Scripture concerning the experience of David, and other inspired servants of God, who,—while they did on some occasions appeal to their own innocence or righteousness viewed comparatively, or as contrasted with the character of their enemies, and with the accusations which these enemies brought against them,—have also made it manifest, that they knew and felt that there was nothing about them, and no action they had ever performed or could perform, which could bear to be strictly investigated in the sight of God, or which did not stand in need of His unmerited mercy and compassion in order to its being accepted, and being not imputed to them, or charged against them, as an adequate ground of condemnation.

This doctrine is also established by what we are taught in Scripture, in many various ways and forms, as to the exceeding length and breadth of the requirements of God’s law, and the actual conformity or obedience rendered to it even by renewed men ; and this, of course, furnishes the leading direct and general proof of the position. A want of conformity to the divine law is sin, as well as a transgression of it ; and the simple recollection that the divine law requires of men at all times to love God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and that of course the absence or defect of this supreme love, as a feature of character, or as the principle and motive of an action, implies the

\* Rom. vii. 15, 18, τὸ γὰρ θέλει παράκειται μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν, οὐκ εὐρίσκω.

existence of a sinful want of conformity to what God requires, or of a sinful neglect of a duty which is incumbent, should be sufficient of itself to exclude from our minds all idea that even renewed men ever have performed, or can perform, any actions which are unstained by sinful imperfection and pollution. The experience, indeed, of the best men in all ages, viewed in connection with the scriptural statements as to the duty which God requires of us, is decidedly opposed to this proud and presumptuous notion ; and it can scarcely be conceived to be possible that any man, who had ever felt anything of the power of religion, or been impressed with scriptural views of what God requires, and especially of that supreme and paramount love to Himself which ought ever to reign in our heart, and be the real source and the characterizing principle of all our actions, should venture to select any action he had ever performed, and assert that, viewed in its source and motive, in its substance and circumstances, it was unpolluted with sin and in full conformity with the requirements of God’s law. Bishop Davenant, in discussing this subject, does not hesitate to say, “Qui in bonis suis actionibus hanc peccati adhæsiōnem non sentit, illum ego nunquam vel unam actionem bonam edidisse sentio.”\*

The sum and substance of the answer which Popish divines give to the scriptural passages that assert or imply the sinfulness of all men, even the regenerate, and the sinful imperfection of all that they do, viewed in comparison with the standard of God’s law, is this,—that what may be sinful about them is not mortal but venial sin, *i.e.*, practically speaking, is no sin at all. Now, this indicates one of the reasons why Bellarmine was so anxious to represent Protestants as teaching the general position, that the good works of regenerate men are *mortal sins*, though the distinction between mortal and venial sins is rejected by them,—while it also illustrates the widely injurious application which Papists make of this anti-scriptural and dangerous distinction. Bellarmine says, that if the good works of righteous men are, as Protestants allege, stained and polluted with sin, this must arise from innate concupiscence, or the deficiency or shortcoming of love to God, or from the admixture with them of venial sins. Now, this statement is, upon the whole, correct, except in virtually ascribing to

\* Davenant. Prelect., p. 427.



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

But it may be proper to advert to the illustration, thus incidentally afforded us, of the extensive and injurious application made by the Papists of their distinction between mortal and venial sins. Bellarmine manifests his deep sense of the importance of this distinction to the cause of Popery, by devoting the whole of the very first of his six books, “*De Amissione gratiæ et statu peccati*,” to the establishment of it; and it is, indeed, of

much more importance in the Popish system than might at first sight appear. A great many scriptural statements require to be distorted or perverted, in order to procure for it something like countenance; and when it has been once proved or assumed, it is then employed, as we have seen, as a ready and convenient medium for distorting and perverting the meaning of many other portions of Scripture. Its direct, immediate, and most proper application, is to lead men to regard as very insignificant, and practically not sinful at all, many things which the word of God condemns as offensive to Him, and ruinous, if not repented of, to men's souls. The tendency of this is to deaden men's sense of moral responsibility, and to make them indifferent about their salvation, and careless about the means by which it is to be secured; or, what is virtually and practically the same thing, it disposes them to believe that guilt,—which, upon scriptural principles, can be washed away only by the blood of Christ, and through the exercise of faith and repentance,—may be expiated by external ordinances, by personal or other human satisfactions, and by priestly absolution and intercession. And, in this way, it has a powerful tendency to seduce depraved men into Popery, or to retain them there; while it enters largely into those corrupt influences by which the Popish system operates upon men's character and conduct, and accomplishes the design of its real author, by wrapping them up in security, and thus ruining their souls. By means of this distinction, a great deal of that in Scripture which is most directly fitted to arouse and alarm, is neutralized or enervated; a shield is provided to defend against the arrows of conviction, and a cloud is interposed to hide from men's view the true meaning of many portions of God's word,—the real import and right application of many statements which bear very directly upon the opening up of the true way of a sinner's salvation. If the doctrine of the Reformers, that an imperfection and pollution which is in its own nature sinful, and therefore deserving of punishment, attaches to all the good works even of regenerate men, be true, it manifestly overturns the common Popish notions about merit and supererogation. It proves that men cannot perform anything that is truly meritorious, since it shows that all their actions—in whatever way God for Christ's sake, and in virtue of the union to Him of those who perform them, may be pleased to regard and accept them—are, when

viewed simply in themselves, and according to their own real and intrinsic relation to the divine law, deserving of punishment and not of reward.\*

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

righteousness of their own, to prepare themselves, or to make themselves suitable or worthy, to receive the grace of God in Christ, instead of at once laying hold of the freely offered mercy and grace of the gospel; while in regard to others who, in the scriptural sense, are working out their own salvation through the grace of Christ administered to all who are united to Him by faith, they are well fitted to lead them to do so with "fear and trembling," by impressing them with a sense of the magnitude of the work, the arduousness of the struggle; and to constrain and enable them ever to cultivate profound humility, and a sense of their entire dependence upon the supplies of God's Spirit.

\* There is an admirable exposition and defence of Luther's statements upon this subject (in accordance with the first quotation given above from Bishop Davenant) in Calvin. "De libero arbitrio."

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE WILL.

THE first three canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent are directed, very unnecessarily, against the Pelagians, and are similar in substance to the canons of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, by which Pelagian and semi-Pelagian error was condemned. There is nothing in them to which any of the Reformers objected, and the only notice which Calvin takes of them in his "Antidote" is by responding—Amen. These anti-Pelagian canons, viewed in connection with the place which they occupy in the decrees of the Council of Trent, furnish an instance of what the history of theology has very often exhibited,—viz., of men being constrained by the force of the plain statements of Scripture in regard to the natural destitution and helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace as the source of all the holiness and all the happiness to which they ever attain, to make large admissions in favour of what all Calvinists, but not they exclusively, regard as the scriptural doctrine upon these subjects; admissions which, if followed out in a manly and upright way, would lead to thorough soundness of opinion regarding them, but which those who have been constrained to make them endeavour afterwards to explain away or to neutralize by the introduction of erroneous notions, which are really inconsistent with the admissions that had been wrung from them. This was very fully exhibited in most of the works written in the course of last century, and even in the present one, by divines of the Church of England, against the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, under the name of Calvinism,—as, for instance, in Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism. Many of these men, in deference to the plain meaning of scriptural language, made statements about the natural helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace, which in their fair and honest meaning involved all that Calvinists have ever contended

for upon these subjects, while they explained them away by the maintenance of positions which, if really true, should have prevented the admissions they had made. The books that have been written by Episcopalians against Calvinism are usually more Pelagian, and more thoroughly opposed to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, than the decrees of the Council of Trent. In its first three canons it admits that men cannot be justified by their own works without divine grace through Christ; that this grace of God through Christ is necessary, not only to enable men to do what is good more easily than they could have done without it, but to enable them to do it at all; and that without the preventing inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, a man cannot believe, hope, love, or repent, as it is necessary that he should do, in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him. And these doctrines, combined with what they had laid down in the previous session about original sin, as we have already explained it, seem sufficient, if fairly understood and applied, to overturn all notions of human ability and human merit. But we have already seen, in several instances, how they corrupt and pervert these general truths, which are expressed with a good deal of vagueness and generality, by laying down positions of a more definite and limited description, marked by an opposite tendency in their bearing upon the method of a sinner's salvation. And in a similar way we find that the three anti-Pelagian canons, with which they begin their deliverance upon justification, are immediately followed by two on the subject of free-will, in which the way is paved for introducing justification by works and human merit, and for ascribing, partly at least, to the powers and deserts of men themselves, and not wholly to the grace of God, the salvation of sinners.

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

churches, as contrasted with those taught by the Church of Rome and by Arminians.

There is one general observation, in regard to the way in which the subject was discussed at the time of the Reformation, that ought to be attended to,—viz., that the Reformers did not discuss it as a question in metaphysics, but as a question in theology; and that even with respect to what may be called its theological aspects, they did not give themselves much concern about any other view of it, than that in which it enters into the description which ought to be given from the word of God of fallen man—of man as we now find him; and as thus bearing upon the actual process by which he is restored to the favour and the image of God. And regarding the subject in this light, they were unanimous in asserting it as a doctrine of Scripture, that the will of man is in entire bondage with respect to all spiritual things, because of his depravity,—that fallen man, antecedently to the operation of divine grace, while perfectly free to will and to do evil, has no freedom of will by which he can do anything really good, or dispose or prepare himself for turning from sin and for receiving the grace of God. This was the doctrine of all the Reformers,—it is embodied in all the Reformed Confessions,—and is fully and explicitly set forth in the Confession of our own Church; and this, and this alone, is what the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions mean when, upon scriptural grounds, they deny to men, as they are, all freedom or liberty of will,—when they assert the entire servitude or bondage of the will of unrenewed men in reference to anything spiritually good. Other topics, both of a metaphysical and a theological kind, may have been introduced into the discussion of this question, and may have been appealed to as affording proofs or presumptions either on the one side or the other; but the true and proper question at issue was, whether man, fallen and unregenerate, had or had not any freedom or liberty of will *in the sense and to the effect above explained*. The Reformers asserted, and undertook to prove, the negative upon this question, and undertook to prove it from Scripture, as a portion of God's revealed truth,—not disdaining, indeed, but still not much concerned about, any corroboration which their doctrine might derive from psychological or metaphysical investigations into men's mental constitution and mental processes, and fully satisfied that a scriptural proof of this one position, which they thought them-

selves quite able to produce, afforded by itself an adequate basis, in an argumentative point of view, for those ulterior conclusions which they also derived from Scripture, in regard to the whole process of a sinner's salvation;—in short, for a full exposition of all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

This doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen man, with reference to anything spiritually good, they regarded as involved in, or deducible from, the scriptural doctrine of the entire and complete depravity of human nature; while they taught also that it had its own distinct and appropriate scriptural evidence. The Council of Trent plainly insinuated, though it did not venture explicitly to assert, that the loss of the divine image in fallen man, or the corruption or depravity of his nature, was not total, but only partial; and there is one application which the council made of this virtual denial of the entire depravity of human nature, in their decision about the moral character of the works of unregenerate men, denying that they were wholly and altogether sinful. But the main use and application which they intended to make, and which they have made, of it, was as a foundation for the position which they laid down in opposition to the Reformers, that fallen man has still some freedom of will even in reference to what is spiritually good,—some natural power to do God's will,—and can thus do something which really and causally contributes to, or exerts a favourable influence upon, his own salvation. The Church of Rome would not have been very unwilling to have asserted more strongly and explicitly the corruption of human nature,—since she had effectually provided for taking it wholly away in baptism,—had it not been that a denial of man's entire corruption was necessary in order to the maintenance of her idol of free-will, or the assertion of the doctrine that fallen man has still some natural power to do what is spiritually good. The Council of Trent, accordingly, has expressly asserted that fallen man retains some freedom or liberty of will; but, according to the policy which was pursued in the formation of its decisions upon original sin, it has left this whole subject in so dubious and unsatisfactory a condition, that it is not very easy to say precisely what is its doctrine upon this subject, except that it is opposed to that of the Reformers. The council contents itself with anathematizing those who say that the free-will of man was lost and extinguished after the fall of Adam;