

## THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### CHAPTER 6.-*Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof.*

I. Our first Parents being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit.<sup>1</sup> This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsell to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.<sup>2</sup>

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Question 1.—*Did our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sin in eating the forbidden fruit?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3. It appears to be God's general plan, and one eminently wise and righteous, to introduce all the newly-created subjects of moral government into a state of probation for a time, in which he makes their permanent character and destiny depend upon their own action, Gen. 2:16, 17. He creates them holy, yet capable of falling, Eccl. 7:29. In this state, he subjects them to a moral test for a time, Gen. 3:11. If they stand the test, the reward is that their moral characters are confirmed and rendered infallible, and they are introduced into an inalienable blessedness forever, 1 Thess. 3:13; Matt. 25:31. If they fail, they are judicially excluded from God's favor and communion forever, and hence morally and eternally dead, 2 Pet. 2:4. This certainly has been his method of dealing with newly-created angels and men, Jude 6; Rom. 5:12. In the case of mankind, the specific test to which our first parents were subjected was their abstaining from eating of the fruit of a single tree, Gen. 2:17. As this was a matter in itself morally indifferent, it was admirably adapted to be a test of their implicit allegiance to God, of their absolute faith and submission, Ps. 106:24.

Question 2.—*What was the first sin of man—pride or unbelief?*

*Answer.*—Although the Papists generally refer to pride as the first sin of man, we exceedingly disagree. The Scriptures teach that the first sin of man must be ascribed to his unbelief. For 1.) In the temptation, the tempter first urges man to doubt the word of God, Gen. 3:1; then to deny it, v.4; before he incites to pride by the promise of divinity, v.5. Therefore, ought the same order to be in the sin as was in the temptation, Rom. 14:23. 2.) Pride could not have place in man except on the condition of unbelief, Heb. 11:6. As long as man remained constant in belief of the divine word, he could never be impelled to the pride of the tempter, nor shake off God's yoke, nor dare to affect a superior degree, unless he did not believe the threatening of death annexed to the prohibition to be true, Gen. 2:16, 17. 3.) Scripture expresses the sin of man by seduction, 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; and mentions the "cunning" of the serpent, Gen. 3:1; which wholly pertains to deceiving. 4.) The first man (without dreadful error) could not believe it to be a virtuous and good thing for him not to depend upon God, since this is the basest thing of all, Ps. 53. 5.) If the devil first tempted the man to pride, he either believed his words or he did not, 1 Tim. 2:14. If he did, then he disbelieved (unbelief) the word of God; if he did not, he could not aim at that which was proposed by the devil, John 8:44. Although in the fall of Adam, which the apostle calls "disobedience," Rom. 5:19, pride is included, it does not

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 11:32.

follow that it was first. The first act of pride was the unwillingness to obey God, 1 Tim. 2:14; the first fount of pride was the unwillingness to believe God's words, Rom. 11:20 *with* Isa. 7:9.

Question 3.—*Was this first sin, by the wise and holy council of God, permitted for the purpose of ordering it to God's own glory?*

*Answer.*—Yes. The Scriptures teach that God does whatever he pleases, Ps. 115:3. The Lord maketh all things for the purpose of shewing forth his great glory, Prov. 16:4; Rom. 11:36. Thus, too, the first sin was purposed to be ordered by God to shew forth his great mercy toward sinners, Rom. 11:32.

Question 4.—*Did the first sin come to pass by the mere, or bare, permission of God?*

*Answer.*—No. The language of permission refers to agency not to efficient cause, Acts 2:23. The Scriptures clearly teach that God works everything, including the first sin, according to his own will, Eph. 1:11. Therefore, God is the ultimate and efficient cause of all things, Acts 17:28. Yet, Scripture tells us that God made all things very good, Gen. 1:31. Furthermore, man was created morally upright and his fall into sin was his own doing, Eccl. 7:29. It is this agency which we assert under the denomination of permission; the reality of the actions of creatures—secondary causality. Though every aspect of the Fall was determined by the efficient decree (absolute predestination) of Almighty God, Acts 4:28; the sinfulness of the actions involved in that fall into sin proceeded solely from the agency of the man, Jas 1:13, 14.