

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

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

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

It is quite unreasonable, then, to assume, or lay down as a principle, that the *only* consideration which justifies or explains the imposition of a command is, that men may obey it, as implying that they *can* obey it, since it is plain enough that there are reasons which may warrant or require the imposition of a command, even when men cannot obey it; and that good may result from the imposition of it, even in these circumstances. The objection which we are considering, assumes that when God addresses a command to men, He thereby, by the mere fact of issuing the command, tells them that they are able to obey it; but we have said enough, we think, to show not only that a statement to this effect is not necessarily implied in the issuing of the command, but that it is quite possible, at least, that the very object of issuing the command may be to teach and to

impress a position *precisely the reverse* of this,—viz., that they are *not* able to obey it. There is nothing unreasonable or improbable in this, and therefore the assumption of the certain truth of the opposite position affords no sufficient ground for setting aside the strong scriptural evidence we can adduce to prove that this is indeed the actual state of the case,—and that one object which God has in view in requiring of fallen men the performance of the whole duty which is incumbent upon them, is just to convince them that they cannot discharge it in their own strength, or without the assistance of His special grace, without the supernatural agency of His own Spirit.

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

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

On these grounds it is easy enough to dispose of the objection against the doctrine of man's inability in his natural condition, and without divine grace, to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, founded upon the fact that God commands and requires these things. These considerations, however, though quite sufficient to dispose of this objection, do not go to the root of the difficulty connected with this subject; for the great difficulty lies not in the mere fact that such commands and exhortations are addressed to men while they are unable to obey them (and this is all that we have yet examined), but in the fact that they are *responsible* for obeying, and incur guilt by disobeying, notwithstanding their inability to render, because of their inability

* Calvin. Inst., Lib. ii., c. v., sec. vii.

to will to render, obedience. This is the great difficulty, and we must now proceed to consider it; but as the objection is often put in the form of an allegation, that God would not, and could not, impose such commands unless men were able to comply with them,—it being assumed that the mere fact of the issue of the command implies that men are able to render obedience to it,—we have thought proper to advert, in the first place, to the objection in this form, and to suggest briefly the very obvious considerations by which it can be conclusively shown to be destitute of all real weight and cogency.

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

We have no great fear of men being ever led in great numbers to deny their responsibility, or practically to shake off a sense of their being responsible for their actions, because, or through means, of any speculative opinions which they may have been led to adopt. The Author of man's constitution has made such effectual provision for men feeling that they are responsible, that there is not much danger that this conviction will ever be very extensively eradicated by mere speculations. When men have been led to deny their responsibility, and seem to have escaped from any practical sense of it, this has been usually traceable, not

to speculation, but to the brutalizing influence of gross immorality—though sometimes speculation has been brought in to defend, or palliate, what it did not produce. On this ground we have no great sympathy with the extreme anxiety manifested by some to shut out, or explain away, *all* doctrines with regard to which it may be alleged with some plausibility that they are inconsistent with responsibility.

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

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

to give anything like a full discussion of it ; and especially without pretending to investigate the general subject of the constituents, grounds, and necessary conditions of moral responsibility, —a subject which belongs rather to the province of the philosopher than the theologian.

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

The sacred Scriptures teach, very plainly and explicitly, that fallen men in their natural condition, and before they become the subjects of God's regenerating grace, are unable to will or to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation ; while they teach, also, that they incur guilt, and expose themselves to punishment, by not willing and doing what God requires of them. And

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

the conditions of the argument, as they have now been stated, required them to undertake.

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

violence, operating irrespectively of his own volition, that prevents him from doing it, or is the cause of his inability to do it, if he has any; while he may also, at the same time, be said to be morally unable to do God's will; because, while there is an inability *de facto*,—*i.e.*, according to the views of those who are conducting this argument in answer to the objection,—the cause of this lies wholly in his will—*i.e.*, in his want of will—to do it,—in his not choosing to do it. In this way there is set forth a sense in which man may be said to be able to do what is required of him, as well as a sense in which he is unable to do it,—he is naturally able, but morally unable; and if these two things cannot be shown to be inconsistent with each other, and if natural ability, or the absence of natural inability, cannot be shown to be insufficient as a ground for responsibility, then the objection is wholly removed.

Now, I have no doubt that this distinction between natural and moral inability is a real and actual, and not merely a verbal or arbitrary one, and that it has an important bearing upon the subject of man's responsibility, and on the discussions which have taken place regarding it; but I am not quite satisfied that, *taken by itself*, it goes to the root of the matter, so as to explain the whole difficulty. The distinction is undoubtedly a real one, for there is a manifest difference between the condition of a man who is subjected to external force or coercion,—whereby his volitions are prevented from taking effect, or he is compelled to do what he is decidedly averse to,—and that of a man who is left free to do whatever he wills or chooses to do. The distinction, thus real in itself or in its own nature, is realized in the actual condition of man. It is admitted by those who most strenuously maintain man's inability, that there is no physical law operating like those regulating the material world, which imposes upon men any necessity of sinning, or produces any inability to do God's will, or to turn from sin, and that there is no superior controlling power or external violence brought to bear directly either upon men's power of volition, or upon the connection between their volitions and their actions. What man ordinarily does he does voluntarily or spontaneously, in the uncontrolled exercise of his power of volition. No constraint or compulsion is exercised upon him. He does evil, because he chooses or wills to do evil; and the only direct and proximate cause of his doing evil in his natural condition—only

evil, and that continually—is, that he wills or chooses to do so. Now, it may be fairly contended that a rational and intelligent being, who, without any compulsion or coercion external to himself, spontaneously chooses or wills evil, and who *does* evil solely because he chooses or wills to do it, is responsible for the evil which he does, or, at least, cannot be easily shown to be irresponsible, *whatever else may be predicated or proved concerning him.*

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

The difficulty is this, that the distinction, when applied to man's outward conduct or actions as distinguished from the inward motive or disposition, seems to apply only to man's *inability to do* God's will, and to leave *untouched* his inability to *will* to do it. It is important to show that man, in doing evil, as he does unceasingly until he is renewed by God's grace, acts spontaneously, without compulsion—does only what he wills or chooses to do; but if the doctrine which the Reformers and the compilers of our

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

There is another ground for doubt as to the sufficiency of the common answer to this objection when urged as a complete solution of the difficulty,—viz., that this mode of answering the objection seems to imply that the want of will is the only or ultimate obstacle or preventative. Now, although perhaps this statement could not be shown to be erroneous, if we were discussing the

subject only on metaphysical grounds, and had to defend merely the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as commonly understood, yet it is at least very doubtful whether such a statement can be made to meet or explain the *theological* doctrine as taught by the Reformers and in the standards of our church.

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

* Confession, c. vi., s. iv.

is that they do not choose or will to do it, since even this want of will itself, or the inability to will, is traceable to something deeper and ulterior as its source or cause.

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

Since, then, it would seem that this distinction of natural and moral inability cannot be so applied as to afford a full explanation of the difficulty charged against the theological doctrine of man's inability by nature and without divine grace to will anything spiritually good, the question still remains, Whether there be any other view or consideration which affords a more complete ground for predicating of man, in some sense, an ability of willing what is good, or of predicating of him something which is virtually equivalent to this, so far as the matter of responsibility is concerned, and may thus afford a fuller answer to the objection founded on the alleged inconsistency between inability and guilt? Before proceeding to consider this question, I must repeat that a survey of the discussions which have taken place regarding it suggests two very obvious reflections,—viz., first, that nothing can now be said upon this subject which has not been said in substance a thousand times before; and, secondly, that the subject is involved

* Turretin., Locus x., Quæst. iv., sec. xix.

in difficulties which never have been fully explained, and never will be fully explained, at least until men get either a new revelation or enlarged faculties.

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

We need not dwell upon these general considerations, as we have had occasion to advert to them before,—especially when we were considering the doctrine or fact of the entire corruption of

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

further back,—resolving it into some more general principle, and thus bringing it perhaps more into the general line of the analogy of views which we cannot but admit—of considerations which we are somewhat prepared to embrace.

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

considered in relation to God, is thus viewed in its legal aspects and obligations as virtually the history of one man, placed in different circumstances, then the special and peculiar difficulty supposed to be involved in the doctrine of man's actual inability, in his existing condition, to do what God requires of him, is so far removed,—that is, it is resolved into the one great difficulty of the fall of man or of the human race; and that, again, is resolvable, so far as the ground of difficulties and objections is concerned, into the introduction and continued prevalence of moral evil,—a difficulty which attaches equally in substance, though it may assume a variety of forms and aspects, to every system which admits the existence and moral government of God.

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

themselves, and had failed in the trial; and that they could not, if so treated, make out any substantial ground for complaint.

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

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

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

* Turretin., Locus ix., Quæst. xv.

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

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

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

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

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

Sec. IV.—*The Will in Regeneration.*

The Council of Trent,—being a good deal tied up, according to the principles which they professed to follow as to the rule of faith, by the ancient decisions of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in opposition to the Pelagians, and by some differences