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ART. I.—*Modern Explanations of the Doctrine of Inability.*

The Inability of the Sinner to comply with the Gospel, his inexcusable guilt in not complying with it, and the consistency of these with each other, illustrated, in two discourses on John vi. 44. By John Smalley, D. D. New York: 1811.

THIS little treatise has long been accounted standard among those who attach importance to the distinction between natural and moral inability, which it elaborately explains and vindicates. It is for the most part characterized by candour and good judgment. It clearly and ably sets forth much important truth. If we were to indicate objections to it, we should call in question certain portions of it, which seem to represent the inability of the sinner as being of the same sort as that of a man to perform any outward act, which he is no way unable, but simply indisposed to do. (pp. 10, 11.)

These instances, however, are few, and aside of the main drift of the treatise. The grand principle which it maintains and successfully vindicates, is that men labour under a real inability to obey the gospel; that this inability is moral, and therefore culpable, yet not, for this reason, any the less real and invincible, except by divine grace. A still more material

fault is a mistaken, or defective, or confused view, (we hardly can say which) of the nature of sinful blindness and spiritual illumination. (pp. 42 et seq.) Just views on this subject are obviously necessary to any clear and complete analysis of man's inability. With these abatements, many important things are said, and well said, in these sermons, by the author, who was among the most judicious and weighty of the circle commonly known as the New England divines. He protested ably and earnestly against the extravaganzas of Emmons. He contributed largely to give the distinction of natural and moral inability that prominence which it has had in American theology.

The peculiar prominence which this distinction has obtained among us, has given rise and currency to opinions in relation to it equally peculiar, especially in certain sections, and among certain theological coteries of this country. It is the boast of those who make the most of it, that it was born into the light, not merely in these United States, but in a province of them, whence it has irradiated our land; or, at all events, that its true import and uses have here first been duly developed; that what is American in it constitutes its value, and is entitled to the support of all good Americans, surely of all loyal New Englanders.

For ourselves, we have long ago learned to distrust, and jealously scrutinize all opinions in theology that are merely national, provincial, or sectional in their origin or prevalence. We look with especial jealousy upon theological provincialisms, in reference to subjects like that in question, which touch the very vitals of Christian experience. In regard to these, all Christians are of necessity, as to all that is essential, illuminated by the Spirit and guided by the word of God. A merely casual, local, and variable type of doctrine, on a subject which enters as an integral element into all our conceptions of sin and grace, has not one chance in a thousand of being true, if it be either opposed to the doctrine steadfastly held by the great body of the people of God of all ages and nations, or if it has been unknown or ignored by the Church as a whole. If a given opinion in relation to this class of subjects, be merely a German, or French, or English, or American opinion,

and that too of recent origin, while it is disowned by the great mass of the saints of all ages and nations, the most formidable presumptions lie against it. That cannot be a part of the faith of God's elect, which is unknown to, or repudiated by God's elect. If it prevail for a while in variable forms among the Christians of some province, or denomination, or party, it is much more likely to prove some casual eddy in the stream of doctrine, deflected for the time by some temporary barrier, out of its true course, than to be in the true current, which has its sources in the Infinite Mind. So far as any views of essential Christian doctrine are local, temporary, provincial, idiosyncratic, they are likely to prove false. Those which have commanded the assent of enlightened Christians as a whole, will survive all occasional opposition or neglect. They are catholic doctrines held by the true Church catholic and universal. The gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

In regard to the subject of the discourses at the head of this article, we suppose that all who come within the outermost verge of evangelical doctrine agree,

1. That man by the fall did not lose any of the faculties or capabilities that are essential to manhood. The essential properties of human nature inhere in every human being, fallen or unfallen, regenerate or unregenerate.

2. That by the fall, human nature, in all of the race, has been corrupted, without being destroyed, and that this corruption infects not the essence of the soul, but only the moral state and working of its faculties and powers.

3. That this corruption of nature involves an inability, of some sort at least, to good, to right moral action, and especially to self-purification or renovation.

4. That this inability is moral, as arising wholly from moral corruption, and pertaining exclusively to our moral nature and state; that it is therefore our sin, and so in the highest sense culpable and worthy of condemnation.

5. That, therefore, this inability is no excuse for the non-performance of any duty for which it disables us, much less for itself, since it is itself the most fundamental, fontal sin.

6. That the only inability which excuses a failure to fulfil any command that would otherwise be binding, is such as dis-

ables for it when the moral state is itself right; and which no degree or perfection of holiness could remove. It is an obstacle or hinderance that would render it impossible, were we as sinless as the man Christ Jesus. Thus it is agreed that a man cannot justly be required to lift a mountain, or a child or idiot to govern a nation with prudence and success; neither can they be properly blamed for failing to do these things. And this for the obvious reason, that were they as holy as Gabriel, they have not the faculties or powers which render it possible.

While this comprehends the substance of that wherein there is agreement, so, justly understood, it comprehends the substance of what is true and important on the subject. But the principal diversities of opinion in respect to it, arise from diverse conceptions of the meaning of those little but important words, "moral" and "sin," and so of the phrases moral corruption, moral inability, moral state, sinful corruption, &c. And here the chief Americanisms in this branch of theology lie.

It is undisputed that, in fallen man, sin is co-extensive with his moral nature; and that if we determine what is properly included in his moral nature, we determine the extent of his sin and moral corruption: or if, starting from his sinfulness, we ascertain its extent, we shall also thus define the limits of his moral nature, and hence the true reach of his moral corruption and inability.

To the question, What is sin? our received translation of the Bible answers, and, as far as it goes, answers right, "sin is the transgression of the law." The original Greek, thus translated, however, answers, Sin is *ανομια*, i. e., lawlessness—which includes not only a positive overleaping of, but a failure to come up to, the law—most exactly rendered in the definition of the Shorter Catechism: "Sin is *any want of conformity unto*, or transgression of the law of God." Nor do we know of any who object to this definition. But one important school of theologians practically ignore it, when they insist that moral quality pertains only to acts done in conscious violation of known law, and in support of this dogma, triumphantly quote the text, "sin is the transgression of the law." It is plain,

that if sin be "any want of conformity to the law," all other questions implicated with this subject depend for solution on this: "What does the law require?" All will agree that the obedience it requires is a moral obedience; and that in the light of its demands, we can surely learn the extent of our non-conformity to it, of our moral corruption, and our inability to keep it. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."

Before proceeding directly to answer this question, it will assist us better to understand the *status quæstionis* for our present purposes, if we just bring to view some of the chief varieties of opinion as to the requirements of that law, which is exceeding broad. For it will be found that this is one of those sources from which the more important divergent currents in theology take their rise. Superficial views of sin and grace, and of the whole circle of Christian doctrine, always involve low conceptions of the divine law, and sooner or later, of God its Author.

A numerous class restrict moral quality and responsibility to acts of the soul committed in view of known law. Of these again, some contend that the only acts which can be sinful or holy, are of the nature of a purpose or determination to pursue a given course or object, formed by a power of choice with a supposed power of contrary choice, and which the soul can therefore make or unmake at any moment. With such theorists, of course, moral inability means simply, that the sinner at present purposes to sin, but may at any instant, when he shall see cause, form a counter purpose, and thus make himself holy. That is, it means nothing at all. It is as clear a misnomer and fraud, as it would be to say that one who can walk, but will not, is unable to walk. Those who adopt this view, hold that the wayward desires and depraved lusts of men are innocent constitutional propensities, void of moral character, except so far as they are sanctioned, or gratified, or fostered by the acts of the faculty of choice and contrary choice just mentioned. This, they say, exclusively constitutes the will and the subject of moral responsibility in man. But there are few who can persuade themselves that no merit or demerit attaches to the desires and preferences of the soul, until they have ripened into deliberate purposes. On

the contrary, they know full well, that all such purposes are prompted by these spontaneous inclinations of the soul, are formed to gratify them, and derive their character from them.

Another and much larger class, therefore, say that the law of God extends to these spontaneous exercises of desire, longing, or preference, with reference to moral objects—whatever the law requires or forbids. They pronounce not merely the purpose to do evil, but the lusting for it, sinful. And they are surely right, according to Scripture, conscience, and the universal and intuitive judgments of mankind. For, says Paul, “I had not known sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” But many who go thus far, restrict all moral quality, and so all sin, to the exercises of the soul. They deny that those states of the soul which dispose it to sinful exercises, whether of desire or purpose, are themselves sinful. At all events, they deny that any innate habits or dispositions, which are not the product of its own exercises, possess this character. Yet, as it is a familiar fact of consciousness, that men cannot at pleasure, by any mere purpose, or fiat of will, reverse the current of their affections and desires, it is evident that moral inability in the mouths of such men, may mean a real inability.

But the Scriptures, and the Christian Church as a whole, take a deeper view of human sinfulness. They pronounce not only the *exercises* of man’s whole optative faculty sinful, but also the innate *moral disposition or habits whence these exercises proceed*. The streams are like the fountain as to their essential quality. It cannot plausibly be denied, that by the words, *flesh, carnal mind, old man, corrupt tree, evil heart, heart of stone*, the sacred writers mean, and the great body of Christians have always meant, something more than an evil choice, or exercise of desire. They signify that native principle or habit of soul, which developes itself in desires, purposes and acts of enmity to God. It is no less certain that they represent what is condemned as sinful in the Bible. The old man is declared “corrupt according to deceitful lusts.” “The tree is known by its fruit,” and hence pronounced “corrupt.” The heart is “evil,” “desperately wicked.” Hence

we are "by nature children of wrath." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." This "fault and corruption of every man's nature" is declared to be sin, which "deserveth God's wrath," by the unanimous voice of the Protestant confessions.

But among those who are agreed thus far, a question still remains, as to the extent and manner in which the intellect is implicated in man's moral state and exercises, and so in his sin and corruption. It has been the common doctrine of the Church, as shown in her confessions, that the whole soul, the heart and the mind, the will and the intellect, the optative, emotional and cognitive faculties are contaminated, and that this corruption pervades his "whole nature." Hence spiritual illumination has ever been held to be a primary element in man's regeneration. But there is a large class of casuists, who contend that no operations or states of the intellect involve any moral character or responsibility, except so far as the products of the will. They divide the soul, as if it were two different entities, one percipient and intelligent, the other elective. To the latter alone, they contend, does moral quality directly pertain. To the former it attaches only mediately, as its state and acts may be produced by the latter. They say that the will first chooses or refuses, the heart first loves or hates an object; and then, in consequence of such love or hatred, the mind sees a corresponding beauty or deformity in it. Hence the perceptions or judgments of the mind, in regard to moral and spiritual objects, have a moral character, not as they determine, but as they are determined by, the will and affections. But there is in reality no ground for such a partition of the human soul. It is not two, but one. It is not in one part corrupt, in another part incorrupt. The will and the intellect cannot be divorced. Every choice and desire supposes a prior apprehension of the qualities of the object chosen or desired. They are but the motions of the soul toward an object which it first sees to be desirable. As in all æsthetic exercises there is a perception of beauty or deformity, attended by a corresponding feeling of pleasure or disgust; so in all moral exercises there is perception of that in moral objects which pleases or displeases, attracts or repels the soul, and so evokes a correspondent

feeling, desire, or purpose. Edwards's great principle is, that "the will is as the greatest apparent good." This cannot be plausibly disputed. Thus, the intellect, heart and will are interblended in all moral acts. This none call in question. The only question is, which takes the lead. This is sufficiently answered, when we say that man is a rational being. He first, at least in the order of nature, sees, then chooses and desires. He does not first desire and choose at haphazard, and then see by virtue of his choice. Such aimless and irrational exercises could have no more of a moral character or accountability, than the most fortuitous motions of an idiot.

But it is strenuously objected, that this view destroys moral responsibility, because it makes the acts of the will dependent upon the perceptions of the intellect. To this we answer, 1. In point of fact the exercises of the will or heart are not independent of the views of the intellect. This every man is taught by his own consciousness. And he knows equally well, that he is responsible for these exercises. If they were unaffected by the perceptions of the mind, they would be irrational, and therefore irresponsible. 2. As we have already said, we do not acknowledge such a division in the human soul, as that one part is pure, the other impure; the moral perceptions holy, the desires and choices resulting from them unholy. The human soul is one thinking, willing substance. The will and heart are somewhat in all moral perceptions. The intellect is somewhat in all desires and choices. Our consciousness teaches us that these are inseparable. We cannot say then, that the cognitive faculties are pure, while the will is the only sinner. But it is the one intelligent and voluntary soul, the whole man, judging, inclining, willing, acting wickedly, that is sinful.

And here we may safely appeal to the decisions of conscience, and the intuitive judgments of the human race. Men not only know that it is impossible to love or choose what is not first seen to be in some respect desirable or lovely, but they fix responsibility and guilt upon perverse moral judgments, with as much certainty as upon any acts of the soul. Any one who is blind to the beauty of moral excellence, in whose view virtue is odious, and vice attractive, mankind inevi-

tably and unavoidably pronounce a bad man. They attach the deepest guilt to all such moral judgments. He who judges prayer fanatical and loathsome, and profanity harmless and pleasant, therein commits foul iniquity. Our responsibility, therefore, for the character of our moral perceptions and judgments, *i. e.*, in reference to things morally good or evil, is past all doubt. As to our knowledge or opinions in regard to things morally indifferent, of whatever kind, that is another affair, and has nothing to do with the subject in hand. The reason why there is guilt in being blind to the excellence and binding nature of moral truths, is the same that renders ignorance of all moral obligation inexcusable. Moral truths shine in their own light, and are their own evidence. If any see them not, they give the most decisive proof of being morally corrupt.

3. But what is still more conclusive evidence of the truth of what we have advanced on this subject, is the uniform current of scriptural teaching in regard to it. One way in which the Holy Spirit sets forth the aversion of men to Christ, is that to their eyes there is "no form, nor comeliness," "no beauty" in him, that they "should desire him." If such is the reason why they have no desire for the one altogether lovely, are they, or are they not, held responsible for it? "Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness." Light is universally represented as the element of purity, just as darkness is represented as the element of corruption. This is the condemnation of men, that they "love darkness rather than light."

As to the natural blindness of fallen man, there is no subject on which the Scripture is more emphatic. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, * * neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Not that he may not discern much about them. He can see, to a certain extent, their meaning in a speculative sense. But he sees not their most vital part, their moral excellence and spiritual beauty, which alone can attract the heart. The crucifiers of Christ saw everything but the glory of his divine excellence, and therefore they crucified him, not knowing what they did, "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the

Lord of glory." But was not this very ignorance their sin? Under a similar infatuation, Paul verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But because he did it "ignorantly and in unbelief," was he therefore innocent, and in no need of mercy? The sacred writers constantly represent deceit, especially self-deceit, as one of the elements of sin. They tell us of the "deceitfulness of sin," the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," of the "old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Is this deceit sinless? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Corresponding to this sinful blindness, is the work assigned to the Spirit in regeneration. It is just as surely, and just as far a work of illumination, as of purification. It opens our eyes to behold wondrous things out of God's law, to "behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It calls out of darkness into God's marvellous light. It is an unction from the Holy One, whereby we know all things, even the things that are freely given us of God. As it is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ, so the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification is a "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God; the eyes of our understanding being enlightened that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."

An effort is sometimes made to break the overwhelming force of scriptural testimony on these subjects, and to prop the theory, that moral quality attaches only to the optative and not to the cognitive exercises, by reference to the fact, that the Scriptures sometimes ascribe this spiritual blindness and illumination to the heart. This argues, it is said, that the blindness and illumination exist, first, in the perversity or rectitude of the will, and only mediately in the understanding, as that is controlled by the will. In our view, however, it proves just opposite; or rather, it proves that the Scriptures contemplate just what we have insisted on, viz., that there is no dualism in the human soul; that in all exercises of the heart, the action of the intellect is also implied, and that in all the moral per-

ceptions of the intellect, the inclinations, the likes and dislikes of the heart are awakened. The mind perceiving, the heart desiring or choosing, are but one and the same soul perceiving, desiring, and choosing a given object. All its faculties, when exercised with reference to these objects, are implicated with each other. Hence such phraseology as the "thoughts of the heart," and the "desires of the mind," abound in the Bible. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And in like manner the heart is deceitful. In accordance with this usage, the Scriptures speak of the blindness of the heart, and of the Holy Spirit shining into the heart, of believing with the heart, and of the willing mind.

If the Bible pronounces the mind, it also declares the conscience, "defiled." In truth, conscience is but the mind judging of moral actions or states as right or wrong, guilty or innocent. Though least of all our faculties corrupted by the fall, it is still more or less disordered.

Thus moral defilement pervades the whole inner man in all its parts and faculties; and original sin is no less than the "corruption of his whole nature," whereby he is "indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good."

This "whole nature" of course includes the body itself, so far as it is implicated in our moral state or conduct. That the body is corrupted by the fall, so far as it is made subject to weakness, pain and death, is among the most familiar facts. That it is so united to the soul that they have a powerful, though mysterious, reciprocal influence, is equally evident and familiar. We know that many states of the body are antagonistic to moral and spiritual excellence, and that it is in many respects an organ, or instrument of the soul, in sympathy with it. There are likewise some moral states that pertain more immediately to the body than the soul, although the soul is implicated in them, and so far lends itself to them, as to contract their purity or impurity. Who can doubt this, that remembers that he who looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart? That gluttony and drunkenness are heinous sins, which exclude from the kingdom of God? We are required to yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God, and forbidden to yield them as

instruments of unrighteousness to sin. The corruption which wars against grace, is styled a "law in the members warring against the law of the mind." Of course these scriptural statements are not to be interpreted as metaphysical formulas. They, however, indicate the well known fact that the body, within certain limits, contributes to, or concurs in, our moral states and acts. What we mean to say is, that, so far as it is in this or any other way implicated with our moral being, it partakes, to the full extent, of its corruption, which is a corruption of the whole nature. The eyes are full of adultery, the poison of asps is under the lips, the feet are swift on errands of evil. In its impulses and propensities, it serves the flesh, lusting against the Spirit. And so the process of sanctification reaches "body, soul and spirit," and in pursuing it we are required to "keep the body in subjection," to "mortify the deeds of the body," through the Spirit, that we may live.

If such be the extent of man's moral corruption, pervading his whole nature and defiling all his faculties, inducing blindness of mind, impurity in the affections, perverseness in the will, defilement in the conscience, pollution in the body, so far that it at once inflames and obeys wicked lusts, the question, whether man has ability to deliver himself without grace from this bondage to corruption, answers itself. He cannot. His inability is indeed a moral inability; it consists in and arises from his moral depravation, and from nothing else. It consists not in the want of any natural faculties or outward opportunities for the discharge of his duty. It would vanish if he were holy. But although it be moral, it is none the less real, entire and absolute.

We find that we have virtually answered the question, What does the law of God require? in handling the different views held on the subject, in different quarters. We have thus been led to show in detail what it requires, and that it is exceeding broad. But the fundamental principle of it, as set forth by our Saviour, covers the whole ground. It requires us to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. This surely shows that all the faculties of the soul, intelligent and voluntary, yea, all the powers, the "strength" of our being, that are capable of contributing to, or participating in this affection, or

of obeying its dictates, must be enlisted in the service. We need not say how distant from this are the affections which in fact absorb the whole soul and strength of fallen man.

Nor is the Bible less explicit and manifold in its assertion of the utter inability of corrupt nature to purify itself, and turn to God. "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." "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." These passages so plainly assert an inability beyond the control of the will, that we have often known the advocates of ability try to evade them by the pretext, that they mean simply, that while a man remains a sinner he cannot be a saint. It is a sufficient reply, that the whole Church of God have understood them otherwise, according to their natural obvious import to every mind that has not some counter theory to maintain. This natural import of these words is verified in the consciousness of the Church, and of every man who has a Christian experience. Withal, to ascribe to the Holy Spirit the use of language, to express a senseless tautology and barren truism, which has misled the friends of God in all generations on a fundamental point, savours more of profaneness than of exegesis. But the obvious meaning of these passages is abundantly confirmed by all the representations of the Bible, which show man to be in bondage to sin, spiritually blind, dead in sin, and so requiring to be delivered out of this bondage of corruption, to have his understanding enlightened, to be born again, or raised to spiritual life by the Holy Ghost, by "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead!"

If all this does not convey the idea of a real inability to holiness in fallen man, then language is incapable of doing it; the Bible, as an attempt to reveal the truth of God to men, is a failure; the Church has been misled by it in a vital point, and infidelity will have new occasion for boasting and exultation. It will not be denied that the creeds of all the great branches of the Christian Church, go at least as far as the Anglican Church, Art. X. "The condition of man after the

fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

Of course, such a doctrine is in the highest degree unpalatable to the carnal mind. That there should have arisen, in all ages, the most dexterous and persistent efforts to evade or emasculate it, was a matter of course. Plausible objections to it have always been abundant and cheap. But it still remains the faith of the innumerable throng of God's people. If some of them disown it, when arraigned at the bar of their "philosophy falsely so called," they all confess it on their knees before God.

The objections to this doctrine, although variously stated, virtually resolve themselves into this: that men cannot justly be commanded to do, or blamed or punished for not doing, what they are unable to do. How then can a just God require them to repent and exercise faith, and punish them for impenitence and unbelief, if they are unable to obey the command? To this the unanswerable reply is, that they labour under no inability but their sin, and which does not disappear the moment their sin disappears. Nothing is required of them which they could not do, and would not do, if they were morally good. Can sin then be its own excuse, because it perpetuates itself, and disables for its own destruction? If so, there is an end of all blame and guilt. Moreover, this state of the soul, although a bondage, is a willing bondage, which it freely adopts. He who committeth sin, is the servant of sin. Although there may be in some cases a desire to be rid of it, on account of the punishment it incurs, there is a preponderating love of sin in the ruling bias of the soul, so that, if it acts freely, it still cleaves to sin. And herein lies the essence and peculiarity of its bondage. As Augustin says, the soul, is "both bond and free, and bond because free." In other words, the inability is moral, but none the less entire and absolute. And the more complete it is, the deeper is the guilt, for the deeper is the sin. How can it be otherwise? Is

it not the universal judgment of men, that the guilt of sinful propensities increases instead of lessening, in proportion to their strength and obduracy?

It is alleged that it is contrary to the goodness of God to bring men into being with a corrupt character, which they are unable to remove, and to hold them blamable and punishable for it and its workings. It is a sufficient reply to this, so far as our present purpose is concerned, that if sin exists, and in such strength as to be invincible except by divine grace, then it is the universal dictate of conscience, that it is in its own nature culpable and guilty, whatever may have been its origin. The sinful states and acts of free moral agents, are ill-deserving in themselves, whatever influences or agencies may have contributed to produce them. The relation of the Most High to the fall of man and the origin of evil, is another and independent subject, presenting its own problems and methods of solution. But they are aside of the case in hand.

Probably the efforts which many have made to explain or attenuate this doctrine, have been prompted for the most part by a desire to free it from the embarrassment which they suppose it occasions, in exhorting sinners to obey the gospel. They wish to take out of their mouths the stale excuse, "It is useless for us to attempt to do what we cannot do. And if we cannot do it, how are we to blame for not doing it?" This was the leading impulse with Pelagius, whose views and arguments have reappeared in all the assaults made upon the doctrine in later times. Says Neander, "on this principle, and from this point of view, he denied that there was any such thing as a corruption of human nature, which had grown out of the fall. Such a doctrine appeared to him but a *means of encouraging human indolence—a means of excuse supplied to the hands of vicious men.* The question which had from the first occupied the profound mind of Augustin—the question concerning the origin of sin in man—could not be attended with so much difficulty to the more superficial mind of Pelagius. This was no enigma for him; it seemed to him a thing perfectly natural that there should be moral evil. *The necessary condition to the existence of moral good, is the possibility of evil.* Evil and good are alike to be derived from free-

will, which either yields to the seductions of sense, or overcomes it." This single passage contains the radical principles of New-school improvements in theology, and, indeed, of all the arguments we have ever met with, for attenuating or rejecting the doctrines of grace.

As to this complaint, that the doctrine of the sinner's inability arms him with excuses, discourages moral effort, and embarrasses Christian teachers in their instructions and exhortations to the unregenerate, several things are to be said.

1. If a given doctrine is proved true by incontestable evidence, it is no argument against it, that the wicked abuse it to harden themselves in sin. There are few evangelical truths against which this objection will not lie. Certainly it will lie against the doctrines of grace. The pretence of "continuing in sin that grace may abound," is as old as the gospel. A doctrine of grace which the wicked could not "turn into lasciviousness," "wrest to their own destruction," and make "a savour of death unto death," would thereby prove itself not to be the doctrine of the Bible.

2. All facts show that this doctrine is not unfriendly to moral improvement. The saints, the excellent of the earth, have always held, that of themselves they were unable to keep the commands of God. On this basis they have conducted their moral and spiritual culture. They have ceased from themselves and gone to Christ. They have made the most strenuous and successful efforts known among men to advance in holiness. An objection contradicted by all facts must be false.

3. The whole method of evangelical culture proceeds on the principle—not of arousing men to a consciousness of their own goodness, or strength to become good—but of their own corruption, weakness, and utter insufficiency of themselves to do works acceptable to God; and so, of persuading them to look wholly to the grace of God in Christ, that in him they may find righteousness for guilt, holiness for sin, and strength for weakness. It is so far from being true, that men can be stimulated to seek gospel holiness by a consciousness of their own strength, that, in such a state of mind, they cannot comprehend it, much less pursue it. The most that they can do with

such superficial and delusive views, is to disguise their disease. They will never apply the remedy. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. They can be strong only in the Lord and the power of his might. And this is possible only when they are sensible of their weakness. It is one great business of the preacher to bring them to this consciousness; the opposite persuasion is fatal to his success. When they are weak, then, and then only, are they strong. Then only is it possible to obey the gospel, or pursue evangelical holiness, when we know full well that we are not sufficient for anything as of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God; that without Christ we can do nothing; through him strengthening us, we can do all things; and so, emptied of self, go to Christ for all—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And in this conviction alone shall we render to God due gratitude and honour for our salvation, from first to last; from his first election of us as vessels of mercy, to our final entrance into glory; so that it shall be in all its parts to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Among those who have been led to attenuate or do away the inability of man, by the same practical interest, which prompted Pelagius to deny it entirely, two principal forms of opinion may be found. 1. A large class admit that man's nature is not only corrupted, but disabled, by the fall. But they suppose that such impotence to good, and subjection to condemnation, by nature, implies an obligation on the part of God to repair these effects of the original apostacy. In other words, if there be any meaning in the theory, God is bound to remedy his own injustice; an idea which refutes itself. A great number contend that he does this, by providing the sacrament of baptism, which, by an *opus operatum* efficacy, washes away the guilt of original sin, and implants a germ of spiritual life, which is capable of being developed by the efforts of the person baptized. Thus, potentially at least, man's forfeited power to good is restored. Such, in substance, is the theory of ritualists. To say nothing of the denial of special and sovereign grace involved in this scheme, and of its antagonism to spiritual religion, how does it afford any relief with respect to the unbaptized, if the natural corruption and

impotence of man by the fall, involve any injustice on the part of God? Another and very large class say, that, although human nature is thus fallen into sin, guilt, and moral impotence, yet common grace is given to every man, through the redemption of Christ, by which this disability is removed, and he has full power to make himself holy—many say, perfect. Wide of the truth as these two schemes are, and distempered as are the types of religious life to which they give rise, nevertheless they agree in asserting the native moral corruption and impotence of man, and the impossibility of its removal, except by a supernatural work of grace. This is therefore the catholic doctrine of christendom. They, however, neutralize it, in great part, by the doctrine of universal grace, or grace co-extensive with baptism, a grace, nevertheless, dependent on the will of man for its efficacy. On this system, it is not God, but the Christian, that makes himself to differ from others, and grace is no more grace. Religion becomes superficial, outward, unspiritual; ritualism, formalism, fanaticism, or a graceless, self-righteous morality. Most of these, with other still graver objections, lie against another favourite scheme of many, viz., that God has lowered the demands of his law in accommodation to man's corruption.

The other method of invalidating this great truth, is chiefly American in its origin and prevalence, and has but a slight currency in other parts of christendom. It takes for its first standpoint, that element of truth which is denied by the systems we have just been considering, viz., that whatever be the moral state of fallen man by nature, it is not such as to impeach God's justice, or to impose any obligation upon him to remedy its faults or disabilities. It is not such as lessens man's sin and guilt. It is such, that whatever God does for its removal, is of grace, and not of debt. But then, in order to maintain this position against rationalistic objections, it explains our inability into a species of ability, either plenary, or nearly so. And, of course, the whole doctrine of sin and grace, native corruption and spiritual regeneration, is explained so as to conform to the degree or kind of ability contended for. The essential peculiarity of this system is, not that man's inability to obey the gospel is a moral inability, but that it

lies solely in the will, and is under its control. Even this, however, means more or less, according to what is comprehended under the word *will*. Under the term are sometimes included all the optative powers of the soul, spontaneous and voluntary, whether operating in the form of desire, wish, preference, or purpose. It often has a more restricted sense, which, excluding the affections and inclinations, makes it a mere power of purposing to do or to seek given things which are objects of desire; indeed the executive of our desires. In popular language, the term is used more or less in all these senses. With a numerous class, too, it means not only the power of choosing what the soul pleases, and rejecting its opposite, but also the power of making a contrary choice at the same moment and in precisely the same circumstances, which is not only contrary to all known fact, but a self-contradiction. And still further, when the word *will* is used in the broad sense already mentioned, as including desire, wish, disposition, or affection towards any given object, it sometimes, in loose popular usage, means nothing less than the whole soul consenting to, or embracing that object; including not only the optative faculty which desires it, but the cognitive, which apprehends it as desirable.

All these loose usages of common speech often insinuate themselves into the elaborate arguments of theologians and metaphysicians on these subjects. Hence have been reared many plausible arguments, which are nothing else than gross sophisms, in which the word *will* has one meaning in the premise, and another in the conclusion. Such ambiguities give rise to much logomachy and mutual misunderstanding. And it is very certain that when men say that our inability is purely an inability of will, or heart, every thing depends on the meaning which they attach to these terms, and the theory which they hold concerning the nature and properties of the will. Under this phrascology, every type of doctrine on the subject of ability may be held, and, in fact, has been and is held and propounded, from the strictest Calvinism to the blankest Pelagianism—from the most absolute impotence to the most plenary ability to make ourselves new creatures by the power of contrary choice.

In this connection, the distinction of natural and moral ability and inability has been prominent. It has long been a boast, in certain quarters, that this is the invention and the glory of American theology, that it has enabled us to hold fast the doctrine of inability, and yet so to explain it as to make the sinner inexcusable, and to prevent him from abusing it to purposes of carnal apathy and desperation. This happy result, which the Bible ascribes to the Holy Ghost, is supposed to be accomplished by showing men that they have full *natural* ability to fulfil God's requirements, that they have no inability, but simply a want of will, or purpose, or inclination to obey the gospel, which they have full power to remove, *if they will*. While this language is used by many in a sense which, as explained by themselves, as a close approximation to the truth, at all events coheres with the doctrine, that man has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; it is used by others to express and vindicate the dogma, that men are perfectly able to make themselves Christians at pleasure. This is Pelagianism, without even a decent disguise. Yet it is this very class who make the most of the distinction in question. They think it a convenient and safe shelter for their doctrine, that man can make himself a new heart. This distinction has been much valued by many divines, whose praise is in all the churches, for orthodoxy, because they held to a real inability to holiness in fallen man. It is surely, then, a safe resort for those who deny it, and yet would not hazard their standing in the ranks of orthodoxy: who assert plenary ability, and call it natural ability, and then say that they teach the moral inability of the sinner, simply because they say he will not use his plenary ability to turn to God!

This class claim that Edwards was the inventor of this distinction; that it is the distinguishing characteristic and special property of his followers; that therefore they are the true Edwardeans, because they are the patrons and inheritors of this, his grand discovery in theology. It can easily be shown, however, 1. that whatever of truth is connected with this distinction, was familiar to theologians, not only before the time of Edwards, but from the time when the heresies of Pelagius

first occasioned thorough discussion of the subject of sin and grace.

2. That Edwards did not regard himself as introducing any novel doctrines or discoveries on the subject. A formerly distinguished champion of New-school doctrines recently said, in a public speech, with great truth, "that the common idea that the power of Edwards's system lies in the distinction of natural and moral ability is a fallacy. This was well understood before his day. It lies in his views of spiritual light which constitute the key to his whole treatise on the Religious Affections." All who have read this treatise, or his sermons on the "Natural Blindness of Men in Religion," and on "The Reality of Spiritual Light," must concede the justness of this statement. The great principle of his work on the Affections is, that "they arise from divine illumination."

3. So far as anything new on this subject has gained currency since his day, it is not true, unless the views which we have taken of the subject are false.

4. However the doctrine of spiritual illumination may have been weakened or vitiated by confining all depravity and moral quality to the will and affections, on the part of any claiming to be Edwards's successors, they intended by moral inability, a real inability, removable, not by any power of contrary choice, as is now claimed, not by "the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God." The precise point in the recent vaunted improvements in theology is, the discovery that this inability being moral, is therefore removable by the will, and so enables us to say to sinners, without qualification, they have all requisite power to obey the gospel. And since even the power of contrary choice, yea, if it be able to act "despite all opposing power," cannot, when choosing sin, under the sway of such a choice, also choose God, a process has been invented, by which it may be induced, from motives of self-love, to suspend its sinful purpose, and having thus become neutral, may, by the promptings of the same self-love, be induced to choose religion!

The amount of truth contained in the proposition, that man is naturally able, but morally unable, to obey God's commands, may be thus stated:—1. Man is really unable to do things

spiritually good, without divine grace. But this inability is moral, because it pertains to our moral nature. It does not excuse, because it is our sin, and the greater it is, the greater is our sin. 2. This corruption and inability do not destroy any of the faculties of will, affection, or intelligence, which are essential to humanity, moral agency, or responsibility. They only vitiate the state and action of those faculties with reference to things moral and spiritual. All power remains which would be requisite to the fulfilment of God's commands, if we were holy. Any hinderance, or want of power or opportunity, which would prevent us from fulfilling any command of God, if we were morally good, excuses the non-performance of it, and this alone. So far, then, as the assertion that we have natural ability is intended to express the fact that we have no disability but our sin, or that is excusable, it expresses an important truth. So far as it is used, or is adapted to convey the idea that we have ability to remove our sinful corruption, without the prevenient and efficacious grace of God, or that our inability, though moral, is such that we can remove it by the strength of our own will, or that it is not by nature, it contains a dangerous error. It is not only contrary to Scripture and all Christian experience, but it is inconceivable that any state or act of the unregenerate will of man should make him a holy being. The corrupt tree cannot bring forth such good fruit. Nay, as all Christians find to their sorrow, they cannot, although partially sanctified, by any power of their wills, exclude all corruption from their souls. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that they *cannot* do the things that they *would*. When they *would* do good, evil is present with them. Though they love the law of God after the inward man, they have a law in their members warring against the law of their minds. How, then, is this indwelling corruption, having the entire mastery of the sinner, removable by his will? And does the phrase "natural ability," according to its natural import, fairly express, or rather, does it not express more than the truth, in regard to the power of the sinner? Is it not, unless carefully explained, adapted to mislead him? That cannot properly be called ability to do things spiritually good, to purify our corrupt natures, which is not adequate to pro-

duce the result. Man has not such an ability, whatever adjectives we affix to the word. He has only the faculties which would enable him to do his duty, if he were holy. Is it not best, in plain terms, to say so? Have we a right to do otherwise than speak the truth in love?

In conclusion, we ask the attention of our readers to a few quotations from recognized authorities, in proof of the several propositions we have just advanced, to the effect, that what is true on this subject is not new, and what is new is not true.

1. Bernard, whom Calvin represents as subscribing to what was said by Augustine, and whom he quotes with approbation, thus expresses his views: "In a perverse and wonderful way, which I do not understand, the will imposes a necessity upon itself, being changed by sin for the worse, so that this necessity (since it is voluntary) cannot excuse the will, nor can the will, inasmuch as it is enticed, exclude necessity in its actions." "So the soul, in a certain marvellous and evil manner, is held under a sort of voluntary and badly free necessity as both bond and free; bond by reason of the necessity; free on account of the voluntariness which characterizes it. And what is more marvellous and more miserable, it is guilty because it is free; under bondage because guilty; and by this means in bondage, because it is free."* He abundantly sets forth the distinction between "necessity and compulsion," asserting the former, denying the latter, and showing that his bondage and necessity are free and unforced; that he means simply to assert the *unavoidable certainty of sinful action*, if there be free action in unrenewed man.

Turretin.—"A new heart is said to be produced in us by regeneration, not in a physical, but moral sense, because the same substance which was infected with sin must needs be rectified by grace. Nor if it be said that we must put off the *old man* and put on the *new man*, is anything more intended

* Bernard as quoted in Calvin's Inst. Lib. ii. Cap. iii. Sec. 5: "Ita nescio quo pravo et miro modo ipsa sibi voluntas, peccato quidem in deterius mutata, necessitatem facit, ut nec necessitas (quum voluntaria sit) excusare valeat voluntatem, nec voluntas (quum sit illecta) excludere necessitatem."

"Ita anima quodam et malo modo sub hac voluntaria quadam ac male libera necessitate et ancilla tenetur ac libera; ancilla propter necessitatem, libera propter voluntatem, et, quod magis mirum magisque miserum est, ideo rea quod libera: eoque ancilla quo rea: ac pro hoc, eo ancilla quo libera."

than that the corruption of sin, which in a moral sense is called the *old man*, because it descends from the old Adam, is to be cast off from the man, in order that the work of regeneration, which is signified by the *new man*, may be begun and carried forward. The same is to be said of other phrases denoting sin or grace derived from the substance of man itself; which are taken in a moral, not a physical sense, nor so much in the abstract as the concrete, for the purpose of more emphatically expressing the greatness of our corruption.* This passage occurs in an argument upon the question, whether original sin has corrupted the substance of the soul, which he, of course, denies. He elsewhere says, indeed, † that regeneration “partakes somewhat of the moral and the physical.” “It is not merely moral, as if God operated only by setting truth objectively before us, and by a slight suasive influence, as the Pelagians pretend.” “It is not merely physical, because it is wrought with respect to the moral faculties, which must needs be moved agreeably to their own nature.” “It has a physical character, because God creates, regenerates us by his Spirit,” &c. “It has a moral character, because he teaches us by his word, inclines, persuades, and by various reasons, as by chains of love, draws us to himself.” That is, it is moral as it is wrought upon a moral subject, producing moral results, in the free choice of Christ, and from rational motives. It is physical, as it is more than a moral suasive influence, acting directly upon the heart or dispositions, and so changing them that they will be swayed by the arguments and motives of the gospel. This also will serve for a key to the meaning of Owen and others when they call regeneration, in a certain sense, a physical change. They mean simply, that it is something more than a change wrought by moral suasion—a supernatural

* Elench. Loc. IX. Quæst. xi. Sec. 5. *Novum cor dicitur fieri in nobis per regenerationem, non physice, sed ethice, quia eadem substantia quæ infecta fuit peccato, debet restaurari per gratiam. Nec si exuendus dicitur *vetus homo*, et *novus induendus*, aliud innuitur, quàm corruptionem peccati, quæ moraliter *vetus homo* dicitur, quia a veteri Adamo descendit, esse abjiciendam ab homine, ut opus regenerationis, quod per *novum hominem* significatur, inchoetur et promoveatur. Idem dicendum de aliis phrasibus peccatum vel gratiam connotantibus, ab ipsa hominis substantia petitis; quæ sumuntur *ethice*, non *physice*, nec tam in abstracto, quam in concreto, ad magnitudinem corruptionis nostræ eo efficacius exprimentam.*

† Loc. XV. Quæst. iv. Sec. 18.

change wrought directly on the heart itself by the Holy Spirit effectually disposing it freely and sweetly to yield to evangelical persuasions, which otherwise it would repel. But as to the clearness with which Turretin saw and taught that our corruption was *moral*, pertaining to the moral state and dispositions, and not any corruption of the substance of the soul, or destruction or diminution of its essential faculties, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt.

Pietet, (edition of Presb. Board, p. 200.)—"But this impotence of the sinner does not excuse him in sinning, since it is not *involuntary* and merely *physical*, arising from a defect of natural power, but *voluntary* and *moral*, arising from a depraved nature. To say that man can do nothing but what is evil, is the same as saying, that man is so delighted with sin, that he is unwilling to cease from it. * * * God therefore justly punishes those whose impotence is such as this." This needs no comment.

Owen.—"Some pretend, that whatever is required of us, or prescribed unto us in the way of duty, that we have a power in and of ourselves to perform. If by this power, they intend no more, but that our minds, and other rational faculties of our souls, are fit and meet as to their *natural capacity*, for and unto such acts, it is freely granted. For God requires nothing of us but what must be acted in our minds and wills, and which they are naturally meet and suited for. But if they intend such an active power and ability, as being excited by the motives proposed unto us, can of itself answer the commands of God in a due manner, they deny the corruption of our nature by the entrance of sin, and render the grace of God useless, as shall be demonstrated." (*Works*. London edition, 1823, Vol. II. p. 302.)

"There is a *natural power*, consisting in the suitableness and proportionableness of the *faculties* of the soul, to receive spiritual things in the way that they are proposed unto us. This is supposed in all the exhortations, promises, precepts, and threatenings of the gospel. For in vain would they be proposed to us, had we not rational minds and understandings," &c. (*Id.* p. 301.)

"There is in the minds of unregenerate persons a *moral*

impotency, which is reflected on them greatly from the will and affections, whence the mind never *will receive* spiritual things; that is, it will always and unchangeably reject and refuse them, and that because of various lusts, corruptions, and prejudices, invincibly fixed in them, causing them to look on them as foolishness." (*Owen's Works*, vol. II. p. 309.)

Owen also asserts, in addition to this, a *natural impotency*, consisting in the want of spiritual light for the saving apprehension of spiritual things, "whence his mind cannot receive them for want of light in itself." As we have already intimated, the view taken of spiritual illumination will of necessity modify the view taken of natural and moral inability. Upon this subject we have said enough already. It will suffice for our present object, to quote another passage from Owen, showing that, while, for the purpose of distinguishing it from mere wilfulness, he called it, in a certain sense, a natural impotency, yet he, after all, so explains himself, as not to militate against the kind and degree of natural ability he had previously asserted, nor to take it out of the category of moral inability, as generally explained by divines. "And this (natural impotency) *is consistent with what was before declared, the natural power of the mind to receive spiritual things*; for that power respects the natural capacity of the faculties of our minds; this impotency, the *depravation of them with respect to spiritual things*." (*Id.* p. 309.) We might quote more to the like effect from Bates, Watts, and others; but it would be tiresome to accumulate further what is already before our readers *ex abundantî*, viz., proof that the distinction in question, so far as it has truth in it, was always a familiar one among divines of the Augustinian school.

Edwards treats of natural and moral necessity and inability as terms already established and in use to denote certain recognized distinctions, which he proceeds to define at length in Section iv. of his *Treatise on the Will*. He says, (New York edition of his *Works*, Vol. II., pp. 33—35,) "I do not mean to determine that, when a *moral* habit or motive is so strong, that the act of the will infallibly follows, this is not owing to the *nature of things*. But *natural* and *moral* are the terms by which these two kinds of necessity have usually been

distinguished; and they must be distinguished by some names, for there is a difference between them that is very important in its consequences. This difference, however, does not lie so much in the nature of the *connection*, as in the nature of the two terms *connected*. The cause with which the effect is connected is of a peculiar kind; viz., that which is of a moral nature; either some previous habitual disposition, or some motive exhibited to the understanding. And the effect is also of a particular kind; being likewise of a moral nature, consisting in some inclination or volition of the soul, or voluntary action."

"*What has been said of natural and moral necessity, may serve to show what is intended by natural and moral inability.* We are said to be *naturally* unable to do a thing, when we cannot do it, if we will, because what is most commonly called *nature* does not allow of it, or because of some impeding obstacle or defect that is extrinsic to the will; either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of the body, or external objects. *Moral* inability consists not in any of these things; but either in the want of inclination, or the strength of a contrary inclination, or the *want of sufficient motives* IN VIEW to excite or induce the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary. Or both these may be resolved into one; and it may be said in one word, that moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination. For when a person is unable to will or choose such a thing through a defect of motives, or prevalence of contrary motives, it is the same thing as his being unable through the want of an inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination, in such circumstances, and UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SUCH VIEWS."

Edwards thus dwells upon the distinction between natural and moral necessity and inability, as a thing which had been understood in discussions of this sort. He no more treats it as a novelty, than he treats the distinction between external and internal motives as a novelty. And the view of it which he presents is essentially one with that given by his predecessors.

We now propose to show that by moral inability Edwards and his followers meant a real inability, invincible by the sinner, and by any other power, except the Spirit of God. The

citations already made sufficiently evince this with regard to Edwards. We will, however, add another, which is, if possible, still more decisive as to this point. In his concluding chapter, on the *Freedom of the Will*, he goes through a summation of the principal Christian doctrines, which are confirmed by the views he had maintained on the subject. He says:

“The things which have been said obviate some of the chief objections of the *Arminians* against *the total depravity and corruption of man’s nature*, whereby his heart is wholly under the power of sin, and he is *utterly unable*, without the interposition of sovereign grace, savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do anything that is truly good and acceptable in God’s sight.”

Smalley.—“*Moral inability* consists only in the want of heart, or disposition, or will to do a thing. *Natural inability*, on the other hand, consists in, or arises from, want of understanding, bodily strength, opportunity, or *whatever may prevent* our doing a thing when we are willing, and strongly enough disposed or inclined to do it.” p. 9.

After proceeding to illustrate this moral inability by the cases of God and Satan, the one morally unable to do wrong, and the other to do right, he says, p. 12—“Should we be afraid to say it is *impossible* for a man to love God or come to Christ while his heart is altogether wicked and full of enmity against God and Christ, people would be ready to think we imagined this might sometimes happen, and that there was no real impossibility in it of any kind. Whereas there is as real and as absolute an impossibility in this case, as in any supposable case whatever. To be more guarded, therefore, than the Scripture is, in this matter, would be to be unguarded.” p. 12.

As to the alleged ability to remove this moral inability by the power of self-determination or of contrary choice, he says: “Should we ever suppose a self-determining power in the will, those who are dead in sin would not be able to help themselves by it. For who is there to put such a power into action in the right way? They will not do it. And a self-determined determination, contrary to a man’s heart, were such a thing

possible, would be no more thanks to him, than the having his heart changed by divine power." p. 34.

"In these discourses, under moral inability to that which is good, is meant to be included all that impotency which consists in moral depravity; whether in principle or exercise, whether in privation, that is, the want of moral rectitude only, or in any positive lusts and corruptions, and whether native or contracted, whether removable by moral suasion, or not without a new creation." p. 60.

It will be difficult to mistake Smalley's views after viewing these extracts from a formal and thorough treatise on the subject by him. And no one has ranked higher than he as an acknowledged and able expounder of the true New England doctrine on the subject.

We will now cite a little from Andrew Fuller, as one who was confessedly more thoroughly moulded by Edwards than any other leading English divine.

"If the definition which I have heretofore given of natural ability be just, it (natural inability) must be either a defect in the rational faculties or bodily powers, or opportunity to put these faculties and powers in exercise. But neither purity nor impurity, come by them how we may, are any constituent parts of human nature. A defect, therefore, in that matter cannot be a natural defect. * * By the *sin of our nature* we mean not any thing which belongs to our nature as human, but what is by the fall so interwoven with it, as if it were, though in fact it is not, a part of it; and so deeply rooted in our souls as to become *natural* as it were to us." (*Works*, Boston edition, 1833, pp. 485, 6.)

"We suppose that the propensities of mankind to evil are so strong as to become invincible to every thing but omnipotent grace." (*Ib.* p. 486.)

"It is *natural* power, and that only, that is properly so called, and which is necessary to render men accountable beings. To constitute me an accountable being, it is not necessary that I should be *actually disposed* to holy actions, (which is the same thing as possessing a moral ability,) but barely that *I could do such actions if I were disposed.*" (*Id.* p. 523.)

We will not weary our readers by adding quotations from other divines of the Edwardean and New England schools. Beyond all question, Smalley and Fuller are fair representatives of these schools, and acknowledged to be among the most elaborate, successful, and reliable advocates and expounders of their views on the distinction under consideration. As to the school of Emmons, as they held that all moral exercises in man, holy and sinful, were the direct creation of the Almighty, they of course denied that holiness could be produced by man, of himself alone.

Similar sentiments abound in Bellamy and Dwight. It is sufficiently evident that, until a very recent period, those who have maintained the distinction of natural and moral inability, have intended by it not that the former meant a real, the latter a merely nominal or unreal inability; and so, inasmuch as man is subject only to the latter, that he has all the ability requisite to render obedience to the law of God really practicable without grace. They meant not an indisposition which it is at any moment in man's competency to remove by the power of contrary choice. They meant by it no mere act of such a power, which it is at any moment all powerful to reverse. They meant a rooted propensity to evil, and aversion to good; a moral bias, which man has not the requisite power to remove. To say that he could remove it if he were disposed to do it, is but saying he would remove it if he would remove it; he would be disposed if he were disposed; he would have moral ability if he had moral ability, the precise thing that he has not, and never will have till it is imparted by the Holy Ghost. As Fuller says, "this is no more than the power of being what they are." But it surely cannot avail to make them what they are not. Without this right disposition, mere natural power, as it is termed, the possession of the faculties requisite to humanity and free agency, can never renew or purify the evil heart. They fix responsibility. They make men guilty for their sins. They make it certain that so surely as the wicked man acts freely, he will sin, and sin only. But they never can make corrupt man a new creature in Christ Jesus.