

then if you could not otherwise, the law not otherwise than punish, as it has arrested you." And shall the law of God, that exact standard of right and wrong, be weaker than that of earthly majesty. *The Conflict* presents it as an *unfixed, accommodating standard*. Hear what it says: "The law of levels its claims according to the capacity of the subject of his spiritual government." "The law of love does not require us to exert any more power than we at any moment may possess." "If we possess no ability at all, then all obligation ceases." In reply these most heterodox, and to us in these days, happily novel and discredited statements, let me say, First, God's law is fixed and inviolable. Originally written on the heart of man, it requires of me to-day what it required of Adam at first, and what it will require of his latest child, that is, perfect obedience. It does not resile from its claims because man has resiled from his obedience. It allows that the inability makes void the command or the obligation. That were a great mistake. Then the creditor should allow the debtor to escape, and the magistrate the felon, because they are unable to pay. But surely the lawgiver's right is not to be measured by man's failure. Our non-payment is a delinquency that does not destroy the debt or his power to exact. No. Obviously punishment (and not absolute forgiveness) must ensue in case of non-performance. Wherefore, that, because he cannot pay, therefore the law has no claims, is most erroneous. Paul tells us a very different story, and, while lamenting his impotence, he affirms the law (see Romans, chap. VII. 12), and fully sanctions its authority. *Conflict's* doctrine of obedience, then, and consequently of the lawgiver's right, are most erroneous. In the second place, inability (which every reasonable person painfully feels) being of a moral, and not of a natural or physical kind, it affords no excuse for delinquency. Were man want of physical power, a "violation of the laws of nature," and a deprivation of faculties, might then be something in what *Conflict* alleges; but all his illustrations and palmations are beside the point, when it consists in want of ability, of averseness, and of pride. The idler's excuse for not working, the gossip's for scandal-mongering. These cannot help it; but *their moral impotence* is their sin. So with man. He cannot keep the law of God through fault of his nature; but through every fault, instead of being a palliation, is a aggravation, and was so judged of and pronounced by the Apostle in the seventh chapter of Romans. Why? concupiscence is sin in its nature. What does *Conflict* say to this? "Depraved nature our misfortune, and not our fault, and less responsibility now," will not do down in this part of the country. Paley's views are the views are to corrupt nature, and they not, therefore, the more to be sustained? How differently did David feel in Psalm 14; and similarly every one that knows his own heart! No godly man ever yet pled

his impotence to good as an excuse, because he felt its source to be his own corruption. Whereupon we must dismiss these apologies. They are unworthy, and uncalled for. Man's inability (which is an act of his consciousness as well as truth of Scripture) is part of his guilt. Then what is he responsible for? For two things: for the act which deprived him of power first, and, next, for not getting new power.

So much for inability, which, because it is moral and inexcusable, we have all the motives and calls of Scripture to correct. I shall now, in the third place, show the salutariness of the doctrine. Right views of ability serve, in the first place, to humble man. This will be admitted by *Conflict* himself. Let a serious person read his pamphlet, and say whether the views of human nature therein exhibited are not rather flattering to corrupt nature than otherwise. Not one sentence which a self-righteous person would not gladly subscribe to. Oh, it is not thus "daubing," we will build up the temple, or convert sinners. Fettered, fallen nature patches up its old work. The foundation must be subverted, and upon its ruins, a new one be built. But *Conflict* does not understand this work. He builds up the old. And so,

Secondly. Right views serve further to make a man despair of his own goodness and strength. *Conflict* wants his readers to "retain, as much as possible, the good nature they bring with them into the world, (Palmerstonian doctrine?) and strive to make it better." Then there is no need of regeneration. For the whole has no need of a physician, but the sick. This won't do.

Thirdly. Right views upon this vital subject lead to right practice. *Conflict* cannot see that: believes they are injurious, and destroy the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. He is entirely mistaken. These are the only views that issue in sound obedience, and in the hands of skilful ministers have, and do issue, in conversions. Had *Conflict* read the Confession on the uses of the law, or the latter part of a chapter we have frequently referred to, he had seen that. But as his principles are quite different from ours, perhaps we could not expect him even then to understand it. Let us add then how they lead. By begetting a sense of dependence upon God, and the effectual aid of this spirit (by whom we are inclined to obey), and by exciting the party to "do all things through Him that strengthens us." *Conflict* does not know the secret of man's inability, playing in the hands, and issuing in his doing all things commanded. He thinks that if we preach not up ability, we do not enforce obedience; but He enforces it upon the ruins of fallen nature, and never gets it, for it is a fact that *when man thinks he can at any moment obey, he never obeys at all*; and so *Conflict's* principles and views are the reverse of practical. But when man feels he must obey, and yet cannot, he is, of course, excited to cry to and depend upon