

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

If a man commits a fraud, he reproaches himself for it, for he feels it was a deliberate villainy; but if he breaks into a rage, he says, (though unjustly) I could not help it, it is my constitution—and he takes no blame. If you represent to him the state of his heart towards God, and attach censure there, you find that he uses the same weapon of defence with still greater force;—O! says he, that is natural to me, I cannot help that. A thousand such examples might be adduced, but these are sufficient to shew that the reproofs of conscience are founded upon, and proportioned to, the conscious possession of power; and that, to whatever extent a man is really persuaded that he has not power to act differently, to the same extent he inevitably feels himself exempt from blame. * * * * *

It would, after all, be much more candid, if those who maintain that man has not power to avoid sin, would acknowledge that, according to that principle, the sinner loses his criminal character. They have excellent authority for doing so, and no less than that of our Lord and Saviour himself. "If ye were blind," said he to the Pharisees, "ye should have no sin," John ix. 41: in other words, If you had not the means of doing right, you should be charged with no fault in doing wrong. And if this is the principle on which he proceeds in the distribution of blame, why should we be discontented with it? It is impossible to admit that sin is no fault, since the sentiment would subvert the whole fabric of the divine government, and turn the oracles of eternal wisdom into foolishness; then let the untenable notion of man's inability, which plainly involves such consequences, be at once, and cordially, and forever abandoned.

Some Divines have shown so much candour as to allow this consequence *in part*. Admitting the general principle that God blames men only for not doing what they could do, and not what they could not do, and conceiving that men cannot do any thing spiritually, but only externally good, they hold that *men are not blameable for not doing spiritual things*, such as believing in Christ. * * * * *

Another method by which it has been conceived reconcilable with common sense that God should so awfully punish men for not doing what they have not power to do, is by such a statement as follows: *Though man has not power to repent and turn to God of himself, yet God is willing to give him power, having promised to impart his Holy Spirit to them that ask it.* Now, it is continued, *man has power to ask for the Spirit, and he ought to pray for it, in which case he would have power bestowed for all the rest of his duty.*

It is an undoubted truth that God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and it is a most blessed en-