

licity of moral philosophy, as to mistake the scriptural argument in relation to human ability, never meets the terms *can*, or *cannot*, in the scriptures, without imagining that they afford full proof of his dogma. And perhaps the general impression is in his favour. Let us quote some examples of its use. "How *canst* thou say to thy brother—let me cast the mote out of thine eye?—Ye *cannot* drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils.—If this cup *cannot* pass from me, unless I drink it.—Christ *could not* enter into the city—his disciples *could not* eat bread.—Christ *could not* do many mighty works, because of their unbelief, —How *can* ye believe, who receive honour one of another?—How *can* you, being evil, speak good things?" A thousand instances of this kind *can* be quoted, and no one will suppose them to imply positive inability. Sometimes an inconsistency is asserted; and at others a breach of law is merely supposed.

Let us select a particular example, which is often adduced in a very positive manner. "The carnal mind, the minding of the flesh, is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be." Now this has nothing to do with the inability of man to believe the gospel, considered simply as a moral agent. The assertion is applied to him, in view of certain circumstances which are stated. He is supposed to be minding the things of the flesh, or giving his affections and time to worldly pursuits and pleasures. The mind, thus employed, *cannot* obey God; but engaged in actual rebellion against him. The Redeemer has paraphrased this matter thus—"No man *can* serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon." "Doth a fountain," says James, "send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine figs?" Surely, all this is plain enough: and no one can suppose it to follow, that because a man *cannot* serve God and mammon, therefore, he *cannot* abandon mammon and serve God. Because a man *cannot* see in the dark, it does not follow that he *cannot* see in the light.

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You perceive that personal responsibility is a perfectly philosophical matter, and of necessity must give form, and shape, and interest to any regenerating or sanctifying influence which may be employed. The plea of INABILITY is nothing more than the refuge of an unenlightened conscience—of an unexercised, and consequently an undisciplined moral sense. And that, not because conscience is by nature dead; but because men have grown carnal amid spiritual privileges, and have become hardened by resisting truth, and impetuously pursuing the gratification of their own lusts; or under false social principles—domestic, fraternal, political and ecclesiastical—have followed the multitude to do evil.

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