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**A Discourse of
the Efficiency of
Regeneration**

Stephen Charnock



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A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

by

Stephen Charnock

A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

Part 1

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John 1:13.

This evangelist so plainly describes the deity of Christ, and in so majestic a style, in the beginning of the chapter, that the accidental view of it in a book lying open by neglect, was instrumental for the conversion of Junius, that eminent light in the church, from his atheism.

We shall take our rise only from ver. 9, 'That was the true light, which lightens every man that comes into the world.' John Baptist, who, ver. 6, &c., was to bear witness of this light, was a light by our Saviour's assertion, 'a burning and a shining light,' [John v. 35](#), but not that 'true light' which was promised, [Isa. xlix. 6](#), to be 'a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth.' The sun is the true light in the heavens and of the world; not but that other stars are lights too, but they all receive their light from the sun. Christ is called the true light, by nature and essence, not by grace and participation: [1 John v. 20](#), 'We know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ,' the natural light and Son of God.

1. True, as opposed to types, which were shadows of this light.

2. True, as opposed to false. Philosophical lights, though esteemed so, are but darkness, and *ignes fatui*, in comparison of this.

3. True original light, *ratione officii*, illustrating the whole world with his light. Whatsoever is light in heaven or earth, borrows it from the sun; whosoever is enlightened in the world, derives from him 'which lights every man that comes into the world.' Some join coming into the world, to lift, and read it thus, 'He is the light coming into the world, which lights every man.' The Greek is something ambiguous, and it may be referred to light, though not so commodiously. But the translation which we have has been followed in all ages of the church; and is contended for (the other is contended for? editor) only by those who deny the deity of our Saviour, or are somewhat affected to them that do.

How does Christ light every man that comes into the world?

1. Naturally. So Calvin; the world was made by him, and therefore that which is the beauty of the world, the reason of man, was made kindled by him. As all the light the world has had since the creation flows from the sun, so all the knowledge which sparkles in any man is communicated by Christ, even since the creation, as he is the wisdom of God, and as mediator, preserving those broken relics of the fall: [Prov. xx. 27](#), 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord,' lighted and preserved by him. The light of nature, those common notions of fit and just in men's consciences, those honest and honourable principles in the hearts of any, those beams of wisdom in their understanding, though faint, and like sparkles raked

up in ashes, are kept alive by his mediatory influence, as a necessary foundation for that, reparation which was intended in his first interposition.

2. Spiritually. So not only the Socinians, but some very sound, understand it; not that all are actually enlightened, but,

(1.) In regard of power and sufficiency, he has a power to enlighten every man; able to enlighten, not a few, but every man in the world, as the sun does not light every man, though it has a power to do so, and does actually light every man that shuts not his eyes against it.

(2.) Actually, taking it *distributive*, not *collective*; that whosoever is enlightened in the world, has it communicated from Christ; as [Ps. cxlv. 14](#), 'The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down;' as many as are upheld and raised, are upheld and raised by God' He does indeed 'shine in darkness,' his light breaks out upon men, but they are not the better for it, because 'the darkness comprehends it not'; as when there is but one schoolmaster in a town, we usually say, he teaches all the boys in the town; not that every individual boy comes to school, but as many as are taught, are taught by him. I embrace the former, because the evangelist seems to begin with his person, as God; his office, as mediator; and then descends to his incarnation; and it is a sense which puts no force upon the words. And I suppose that every man is added, to beat down the proud conceits of the Jews, who regarded the Gentiles with contempt, as not enjoying the privileges conferred upon themselves; but the evangelist declares, that what the Gentiles had in natural light, and what they were to have in spiritual light, did, and was to come from him, who would disperse his beams in all nations, ver. 10. And therefore 'he was in the world,' before his coming in the flesh, in regard of his virtue and efficacy, by the spreading his beams over the world, enlightening men in all ages and places with that common light of nature; he was near to every man; 'in him they lived, and moved, and had their being;' but the world by their natural wisdom knew him not, and glorified him not. 'The world was made by him, yet the world know him not.' Ingratitude has been the constant portion of the mediator, from the world; they knew him not in past ages, knew him not in the present age of his coming in the flesh; they did not acknowledge him with that affection, reverence, and subjection that was due to him.

He aggravates this contempt of Christ,

1. By the general right he had, 'he came to his own,' "Eis ta idia", ver. 11, meaning the world, it being put in the neuter gender. The whole world was his property and his goods, yet they knew not their owner. In this, worse than the ox or ass.

2. By the special privileges conferred on those to whom he first came, and from whom he should have the most welcome reception; implied in these words, 'and his own,' "hoi idioi", in the masculine gender, his own people, that had been his treasure, to whom he had given his law, entrusted with the covenants and oracles of God, these 'received him not.' His own, some say, as being peculiarly committed to him, the angel of the covenant; whereas other nations were committed to angels to receive laws from them. His own flesh and blood,

who expected a Messiah, to whom he was particularly sent, as being the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Christ is most rejected where proffers most kindness. Those of Tyre and Sidon, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, would not have used him so ill as Capernaum and Jerusalem, his own people. He descends to show the loss of them that rejected him, the benefit of those that received him: ver. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.'

Where is,

1. The subject: these that received him.
2. The benefit: the dignity of sonship.
3. The manner of conferring this benefit: 'gave them power.'

4. The instrumental cause: 'believe on his name.' Though his own rejected him, they lost a dignity which was conferred upon those that received him: he lost not his pains, for he gathered sons to God out of all parts of the world. 'To as many as received him.' It was not now peculiar to the Jews, who boasted of being Abraham's seed, and to have the covenant entailed upon them to be the people of God. It was now conferred upon those who were before *Lo-ammi* and *Lo-ruhamah*, [Hos. ii. 23](#). It was nothing but faith on his name that gave men the privilege of being the sons of God, and this was communicated to Gentiles as well as Jews. Power: not a power, but a dignity, as the word properly signifies. Not a power if they would, but a will, for they were born of the will of God. Faith brings men into a special relation to God; which faith is more than an assent and giving credit to God; for to believe on God, to believe on his name, is a phrase peculiar to Scripture. 'To become the sons of God;' some understand this of sonship by adoption, but the following verse gives us light to understand it of a sonship by regeneration. St Paul uses the word adoption, but St John, both in his gospel and epistles, speaks more of the new birth, and sonship by it, than any of the other apostles; 'who were born not of blood,' or 'of bloods.' He removes all other causes of this, which men might imagine, and ascribes it wholly to God. This place is variously interpreted. 'Not of blood.' Not by natural instinct, says one; not by an illustrious stock. The Jews imagined themselves holy by their carnal generation from Abraham in a long train of ancestors. Grace runs not in a blood. It is not often a flower growing upon every ability; 'not many wise, not many mighty.' Not hereditary by a mixture of blood. Natural generation makes men no more regenerate than the rich man in hell was regenerate by Abraham, his natural ancestor, whom he calls 'father Abraham.' Religious parents propagate corruption, not regeneration; carnal generation is by nature, not by grace; by descent from Adam, not by implantation in Christ. Abraham had an Ishmael, and Isaac an Esau: man begets only a mortal body, but grace is the fruit of an incorruptible seed. 'Nor of the will of the flesh.' Not by human election, as Eve judged of Cain that he should be the Messiah, or Isaac of Esau that he should be heir of the promise, as the Jews say. Not by a choice of those things which are necessary, profitable, or delightful to the flesh; not by a will affected to the flesh, or things

of the flesh. Not by any sensual appetite, whereby men used to adopt one to bear up their names when they scanted posterity of their own. I would rather conceive it to be meant of the strength of nature, which is called *flesh* in Scripture; not by legal observances, the ceremonies of the law being called carnal or fleshly ordinances, [Heb. ix. 10](#). It is not a fruit of nature or profession. 'Nor of the will of man.' Calvin takes the will of the flesh and the will of man for one and the same thing, the apostle using two expressions only to fix it more upon the mind. I rather fudge it to be meant thus: not by natural principles, or moral endowments, which are the flower and perfection of man as man. It is not arbitrary, of the will of man, or the result naturally of the most religious education. All the power of regenerate men in the world joined together cannot renew another; all the industry of man, without the influence of the heavens in the sun and rain, cannot produce fruit in the earth, no, nor the moral industry of men grace in the soul; 'but of God,' or the will of God; his own will: [James i. 18](#), 'Of his own will begot he us,' exclusive of all other wills mentioned before. It is the sole efficiency of God; he has the sole hand in it; therefore we are said to be both begotten and born of him, [1 John v. 18](#). It is so purely God's work, that as to the principle he is the sole agent; and as to the manifestation of it, he is the principal agent. Not of the will of the flesh, that is only corruption; nor of the will of man, that at best is but moral nature. But whatsoever the meaning of those particular expressions is, the evangelist removes all pretences nature may make to the efficiency of this regeneration, and ascribes it wholly to God.

1. There is a removal of false causes.

2. A position of the true cause.

(1.) The efficient, God.

(2.) The manner, by an act of his will.

Showing thereby,

[1.] To necessity in him to renew us, no motive but from himself.

[2.] No merit on our parts. Man cannot merit, say the papists, before grace, no child can merit his own birth, no man grace.

Doct. 1. Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself.

It is subjectively in the creature, not efficiently by the creature, neither ourselves nor any other creature, angels, men, ordinances.

Doct. 2. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

Doct. 1. For the first. Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. This is not the birth of a darkened wisdom and an enslaved will. We affect a kind of divinity, and would centre ourselves in our own strength; therefore it is good to be sensible of our own impotency, that God may have the glory of his own grace, and we the comfort of it in a higher principle and higher power than our own. It is not the bare proposal of grace, and the leaving the will to an indifferent posture, balanced between good

and evil, undetermined to the one or the other, to incline and determine itself which way seems best to it. Not one will, in the whole rank of believers, left to themselves. The evangelist excepts not one man among them; for as many as received Christ, as many as believed, were the sons of God, who were born; which believers, every one that had this faith as the means, and this sonship as the privilege, were born not of the will of the flesh nor the will of man.

For the proof of this in general,

1. God challenges this work as his own, excluding the creature from any share as a cause: [Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27](#), 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, I will cleanse you, I will give you a new heart, I will put a new spirit into you, I will take away the heart of stone, I will give you a heart of flesh, I will put my Spirit into you.' Here *I will* no less than seven times. Nothing is allowed to man in the production of this work in the least; all that is done by him is the walking in God's statutes by virtue of this principle. The sanctifying principle, the actual sanctification, the reception of it by the creature, the removal of all the obstructions of it, the principle maintaining it, are not in the least here attributed to the will of man. God appropriates all to himself. He does not say he would be man's assistant, as many men do, who tell us only of the assistance of the gospel, as if God in the gospel expected the first motions of the will of man to give him a rise for the acting of his grace. You see here he gives not an inch to the creature. To ascribe the first work, in any part, to the will of man, is to deprive God of half his due, to make him but a partner with his creature. The least of it cannot be transferred to man but the right of God will be diminished, and the creature go shares with his Creator. Are we not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing? and are we sufficient to part stakes with God in this divine work? What partner was the creature with God in creation? It is the Father's traction alone, without the hand of free-will. 'None can come, except the Father, which has sent me, draw them,' [John vi. 44](#). The mission of the Mediator, and the traction of the creature, are by the same hand. Our Saviour could not have come unless the Father had sent him, nor can man come to Christ unless the Father draw him. What is that which is drawn? The will. The will, then, is not the agent; it does not draw itself.

2. The titles given to regeneration evidence it. It is a creation. What creature can give itself a being? It is a putting in a law and a new heart. What matter can infuse a soul into itself? It is a new birth. What man did ever beget himself? It is an opening the heart. What man can do this, who neither has the key, nor is acquainted with the wards? Not a man knows the heart; it is deceitful above all things, who can know it?

3. The conveyance of original corruption does in part evidence it. We have no more interest of our wills in regeneration, than we had in corruption. This was first received by the will of Adam, our first head, thence transmitted to us without any actual consent of our wills in the first transmission; that is conveyed to us from the second Adam, without any actual consent of our wills in the first infusion. Yet though the wills of Adam's posterity are mere passive in the first conveyance of the corrupt habit from him by generation, yet after-

wards they are active in the approbations of it, and production of the fruits of it. So the will is merely passive in the first conveyance of the grace of regeneration, though afterwards it is pleased with it, and brings forth fruit meet for it.

4. Scripture represents man exceeding weak, and unable to do any thing spiritually good. 'So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God,' [Rom. viii. 8](#). He concludes it by his *so then*, as an infallible consequence, from what he had discoursed before. If, as being in the flesh, they cannot please God, therefore not in that which is the highest pleasure to God, a framing themselves to a likeness to him. The very desire and endeavour of the creature after this, is some pleasure to God, to see a creature struggling after holiness; but they that are in the flesh cannot please him. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' was said of our Saviour. So may we better say, Can any good thing come out of the flesh, the enslaved, possessed will of man? If it be free since it was captivated by sin, who set it free? Nothing can, but 'the law of the Spirit of life,' [Rom. viii. 2](#). To be 'sinners,' and to be 'without strength,' is one and the same thing in the apostle's judgment: [Rom. v. 6, 8](#), 'While we were yet without strength;' afterwards, 'while we were yet sinners;' he does not say, We are without great strength, but without strength, such an impotence as is in a dead man. Not like a man in a swoon, but a man in a grave. God only is almighty, and man all impotency; God only is all-sufficient, and man all-indigent. It is impossible we can have a strength of our own, since our first father was feeble, and conveyed his weakness to us; by the same reason that it is impossible we can have a righteousness of our own, since our first father sinned: [Isa. xliiii. 26, 27](#), 'Declare, that thou may be justified. Thy first father has sinned.'

5. This weakness is universal. Sin has made its sickly impressions in every faculty. The mind is dark, [Eph. iv. 18](#), he cannot know, [1 Cor. ii. 14](#), there is a stoniness in the heart, he cannot bend, [Zech. vii. 12](#); there is enmity in the will, he cannot be subject, [Rom. viii. 7](#). As to faith, he cannot believe, [John xii. 89](#). As to the Spirit, the worker of faith, he cannot receive; that is, of himself, [John xiv. 17](#); acknowledge Christ he cannot, [1 Cor. xii. 3](#). As to practice, he cannot bring forth fruit, [John xv. 4](#). The unrighteousness introduced by Adam poured a poison into every faculty, and dispossessed it of its strength, as well as of its beauty: what else could be expected from any deadly wound but weakness as well as defilement? The understanding conceives only such thoughts as are pleasing to the law of sin; the memory is employed in preserving the dictates and decrees of it; the imagination full of fancies imprinted by it; the will wholly submitting to its authority; conscience standing with fingers in its mouth, for the most part not to speak against it; the whole man yielding itself and every member to the commands of it, and undertaking nothing but by its motions, [Rom. vi. 19](#).

6. To evince it, there is not one regenerate man but in his first conversion is chiefly sensible of his own insufficiency; and universal consent is a great argument of the truth of a proposition; it is a ground of the belief of a deity, it being the sentiment of all nations. I

do not speak of disputes about it from the pride of reason, but of the inward experience of it in any heart. What more frequent in the mouths of those that have some preparations to it by conviction, than I cannot repent, I cannot believe, I find my heart rotten, and base, and unable to any thing that is good! There have been instances of those that would elevate the power of man, and freedom of will in spiritual things, who have been confuted in their reasonings, and acknowledged themselves so, when God has come to work savingly upon them. Indeed, this poverty of spirit, or sense of our own emptiness, insufficiency, and indigence, is the first gospel grace wrought in the soul, and stands in the head of all those noble qualifications in our Saviours sermon, as fitting men for the kingdom of God: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' [Mat. v. 3](#). And God in the whole progress of this work keeps believers in a sensibleness of their own weakness, thereby to preserve them in a continual dependence on him; and therefore sometimes withdraws his Spirit from them, and lets them fall, that they may adhere more closely to him, and less confide in themselves.

2. What kind of impotency or insufficiency is there in the soul to be the cause of this work?

Ans. 1. It is not a physical weakness for want of faculties. Understanding we have, but not a spiritual light in it to direct us; will we have, but no freedom to choose that which is spiritually good. Though since the fall we have such a free will left, which pertains to the essential nature of man, yet we have lost that liberty which belongs to the perfection of human nature, which was to exercise acts spiritually good and acceptable to God! Had the faculties been lost, Adam had not been capable of a promise or command, and consequently of ever sinning after. In Adam, by creation we were possessed of it. In Adam, by his corruption, we were stripped of it; we have not lost the physical but the moral nature of these faculties; not the faculties themselves, but the moral goodness of them. As the elementary heat is left in a carcass, which yet is unfit to exercise any animal action for want of a soul to enliven it; so, though the faculties remain after this spiritual death, we are unfit to exert any spiritual action for want of grace to quicken them. If man wanted faculties, this want would excuse him in his most extravagant actions: no creature is bound to that which is simply impossible; nay, without those faculties, he could not act as a rational creature, and so were utterly incapable of sinning. Sin has untuned the strings, but did not unstring the soul; the faculties were still left, but in such a disorder, that the wit and will of man can no more tune them, than the strings of an untuned lute can dispose themselves for harmony without a musician's hand.

2. Neither is it a weakness arising from the greatness of the object above the faculty. As when an object is unmeet for a man, because he has no power in him to comply with it; as to understand the essence of God; this the highest creature in its own nature cannot do, because God dwells in inaccessible light; and it is utterly impossible for any thing but God to comprehend God. If man were required to become an angel, or to rise up and kiss the

sun in the firmament; these were impossible things, because man wanted a faculty in his primitive nature for such acts: so if God had commanded Adam to fly without giving him wings, or to speak without giving him a tongue, he had not been guilty of sin in not doing it, because it was not disobedience, for disobedience is only in what a man has a faculty to do; but to love God, praise him, depend upon him, was in the power of man's original nature, for they were not above those faculties God endued him with, but very correspondent and suitable to him. The objects proposed are in themselves intelligible, credible, capable to be comprehended.

3. Neither is it a weakness arising from the insufficiency of external revelation. The means of regeneration are clearly revealed in the gospel, the sound is gone into all the earth, [Rom. x. 18](#), and the word of the Lord is an apprehensible object; it is 'near us, even in our mouths,' [Rom. x. 8](#); 'the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,' [Ps. xix. 8](#). If the object were hid, the weakness lay not on the part of man, but on the insufficiency of revelation; as if any thing were revealed to man in an unknown tongue, there were an insufficiency in the means of revelation.

But, 4, it is a moral weakness. The disability lies chiefly in the will, [John v. 40](#); what is there, '*You will not come to me,*' is, ver. 44, '*How can you believe?*' You cannot, because you will not. Carnal lusts prepossess the heart, and make their party in the will against the things of God; so that inward propensities to embrace sin, are as great as the outward temptations to allure to it, whereby the soul is carried down the stream with a wilful violence. In this respect he is called dead, though the death be not of the same nature with a natural death; for such a one has not the natural faculty to raise himself, but this is an impotency arising from a voluntary obstinacy; yet the iniquity of a man binds him no less powerfully under this spiritual captivity, than a natural death and insensibility keeps men in the grave; and those fetters of perversity they can no more knock off, than a dead man can raise himself from the grave. By reason of those bands they are called prisoners, [Isa. xiii. 7](#), and cannot be delivered without the powerful voice of Christ commanding and enabling them to go forth: [Isa. xlix. 9](#), 'That thou must say to the prisoner, Go forth.' The apostle lays the whole fault of men's not receiving the truth upon their wills: [2 Thess. ii. 10](#), 'They received not the love of the truth;' they heard it, they knew it, but they loved not that which courted them. It is not seated in any defect of the will, as it is a power of the soul; for then God, who created it, would be charged with it, and might as well charge beasts to become men, as men to become gracious. Man, as a creature, had a power to believe and love God; to resist temptations, avoid sin, and live according to nature; but man, as corrupted by a habit derived to him from his first parents, and increased by a custom in sin, cannot believe, cannot love God, cannot bring himself into a good frame; as a musician cannot play a lesson when he has the gout in his fingers. When the eyes are full of adultery, when the heart is full of evil habits, it 'cannot cease to sin,' it cannot be gracious, [2 Pet. ii. 14](#).

Now, these habits are either innate, or contracted and increased.

(1.) Innate. By nature we have a habit of corruption, fundamental of all other that grow up in us. Man made a covenant with sin, contracted a marriage with it; by virtue of this covenant sin had a full power over him. What the apostle speaks of the marriage between man and the law, [Rom. vii. 1-4](#), is applicable to this case. Sin as a husband, by way of covenant, has a powerful dominion over the will, and binds it as long as sin lives; and the will has no power to free itself, unless a higher power make a divorce, or by the death of the husband. This is the cause of man's obstinacy against any return to God, the will is held in the cords of sin, [Prov. v. 22](#). The habit has obtained an absolute sovereignty over it: [Hosea v. 4](#), 'They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God.' Why? 'For the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them,' that is, in their hearts. This adulterous or idolatrous habit holds their wills in chains, and acts them as a man possessed by the devil is acted according to the pleasure of the devil. The devil speaks in them, moves in them, and does what he pleases by them. And which binds the will faster, this habit is not in a natural man by way of a tyranny, but a voluntary sovereignty on the part of the will, the will is pleased and tickled with it. As a woman (to use the similitude of the Holy Ghost in that place) is so overruled by her affections to other lovers that she cannot think of returning to her former husband, but her unlawful love plays all its pranks, and rises with that force against all arguments from honesty and credit, that it keeps her still in the chains of an unlawful lust, so this is not a habit which does oppress nature, or force it against its will, but by its incorporation, and becoming one with our nature, has quite altered it from that original rectitude and simplicity wherein God at first framed it. It is a law of sin, which having razed out the purity of the law of nature, commands in a greater measure in the stead of it. Hence it is as natural to man, in his lapsed state, to have perverse dispositions against God, as it is essential to him to be rational. And the chariot of that weak remaining reason left us, is overturned by our distempered passions; and the nobler part of man is subject to the rule of these, which bear down the authority both of reason and God too. That one sin of the angels, howsoever complicated we know not, taking place as a habit in them, has bound them for ever from rising to do any good, or disentangling themselves from it, and may perhaps be meant by those 'chains of darkness' wherein they are reserved and held to the judgment of the great day, having no will to shake them off, though they have light enough to see the torment appointed for them.

(2.) New contracted and increased habits upon this foundation. Custom turns sin more into another nature, and completes the first natural disorder. An unrenewed man daily contracts a greater impotency, by adding strength to this habit, and putting power into the hands of sin to exercise its tyranny, and increasing our headstrong natures in their unruliness. It is as impossible of ourselves to shake off the fetters of custom, as to suppress the unruliness of nature: [Jer. xiii. 23](#), 'Can an Ethiopian change his skin? or a leopard his spots? then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' The prophet speaks not here of what they

were by nature, but what they were by custom; contracting thereby such a habit of evil, that, like a chronic disease could not be cured by any ordinary means. But may he not accustom himself to do good? No, it is as impossible as for an Ethiopian to change his skin. Those habits draw a man to delight, and therefore to a necessity, of sinning. The pleasure of the heart, joined with the sovereignty of sin, are two such strong cords as cannot be untwisted or cut by the soul itself, no, not without an overruling grace. It was a simple wound in Adam, but such as all nature could not care, much less when we have added a world of putrefaction to it. The stronger the habit, the greater the impotency. If we could not raze out the stamp of mere nature upon our wills, how can we raze out the deeper impressions made by the addition of custom? If Adam, who committed but one sin, and that in a moment, did not seek to regain his lost integrity, how can any other man, who by a multitude of sinful acts has made his habit of a giant-like stature, completed many parts of wickedness, and scoffed at the rebukes of conscience?

Let us now see wherein this weakness of our wills to renew ourselves does appear.

1. In a total moral unfitness for this work. Grace being said to make us meet for our Master's use, it implies an utter unfitness for God's use of ourselves before grace. There is a passive capability, a stump left in nature, but no fitness for any activity in nature, no fitness in nature for receiving grace, before grace; there is nothing in us naturally which does suit or correspond with that which is good in the sight of God. That which is natural is found more or less in all men; but the gospel, which is the instrument of regeneration, finds nothing in the nature of man to comply with the main design of it. There is indeed some compliance of moral nature with the moral precepts in the gospel, upon which account it has been commended by some heathens; but nothing to answer the main intendment of it, which is faith, the top grace in regeneration. This has nothing to commend itself to mere nature, nor finds an internal principle in man that is pleased with it, as other graces do, as love, meekness, patience, &c. For faith strips a man of all his own glory, brings himself from himself to live dependently upon another, and makes him act for another, not for himself; and therefore meets not with any one principle in man to show it countenance: 'No good thing dwells in the flesh,' *Rom. vii. 18*. There may be some motions lighting there, as a fly upon a man's face; but they have no settled abode, and spring not up from nature. If the apostle, who was renewed, found an unfitness in himself to do that which was good, how great is that unfitness in a mere natural will, which is wholly under the power of the flesh, and has no principle in it correspondent to spiritual truth, to renew itself! If this regeneration had any foundation in nature, it would be then in most men that hear the gospel, because there is not a general contradiction in men to those things which are natural; but since there is no good thing dwells in any flesh, how can it be fit of itself to be raised into a conformity to God, which is the highest pitch of the creature's excellency? The Scripture represents us not as earth, which is fit to suck in showers from heaven; but as stones, which are only

moistened in the superficies by the rain, but answers not the intendment of it. Adamants are unfit to receive impressions; and the best natural heart is no better, like a stone, cold and hard. The soul with its faculties is like a bird with its wings, but clogged with lime and clay, unfit to fly. A barren wilderness is absolutely unfit to make a pleasant and fruitful garden. There is a contractedness of the heart till God enlarge and open it, and that in the best nature. [Acts xvi. 14](#), Lydia, it is said, worshipped God; there was religion in her, yet the Lord opened her heart for the gospel. Can anything be more indisposed than a fountain that is always bubbling up poison? So is the heart of man, [Gen. vi. 5](#). The least imagination rising up in the heart is evil, and can be no better, since the heart itself is a mass of venom. If the renewed natures find so much indisposition in the progress of sanctification, though their sails be filled with grace, how great must it be where corrupt nature only sits at the stern! As when Satan came to tempt our Saviour he found nothing in him, no touchwood in his nature to take fire by a temptation, so when the Spirit comes, he finds no tinder in man to receive readily any spark of grace. This unfitness is in the best mere nature, that seems to have but a drop of corruption: a drop of water is as unfit to ascend as a greater quantity.

2. There is not only an unfitness, but an unwillingness. A senseless sluggishness and drowsiness of soul, loath to be moved. No man does readily hold out his arms to embrace the tenders of the gospel. What folding of the arms! yet a little more slumber, a little more sin. Man is a mere darkness before his effectual calling: 'Who has called us out of darkness,' [1 Peter ii. 9](#). His understanding is darkened; the will cannot embrace a thing offered, unless it have powerful arguments to persuade it of the goodness of that thing which is offered; which arguments are modelled in the understanding, but that being darkened, has wrong notions of divine things, therefore cannot represent them to the will to be pursued and followed. Adam's running away from God to hide himself, after the loss of his original righteousness, discovers how unwilling man is to implore God's favour. How deplored is the condition of man by sin! since we find not one prayer put up by Adam, nor can we suppose any till the promise of recovery was made, though he was sensible of his nakedness, and haunted by his conscience: 'I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself,' [Gen. iii. 10](#). He had no mind, no heart, to turn suppliant unto God; he runs from God, and when God finds him out, instead of begging pardon by humble prayer, he stands upon his justification, accuses God to be the cause by giving him the woman, by whose persuasion he was induced to sin. What glass will better discover the good will of nature to God than the first motions after the fall!

3. There is not only an unfitness and unwillingness, but an affection to something contrary to the gospel. The nature of outward objects is such, that they attract the sensitive appetite, corrupted by sin, to prefer them before that which is more excellent; the heart is forestalled by an inordinate love of the world, and a pleasure in unrighteousness: [2 Thess.](#)

ii. 12, they 'believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' ("Eudochesantes"), a singular pleasure. Where the heart and the devil agree so well, what liking can there be to God or his will? Where the amity between sin and the soul is so great, that sin is self, and self is sin, how can so delightful a friend be discarded, to receive one he thinks his enemy! This weakness arises from a love to something different or contrary to what is proposed. When a man is so tied to that object which he loves that he minds not that contrary object which is revealed by a fit light, as a man that has his eyes or his heart fixed upon a fair picture, cannot observe many things that occur about him; or if he does consider it, he is taken so much with the things he loves, that he seems to hate the other; that though he does count it good, yet compared with what he loved before, he apprehends it as evil, and judges it evil, merely by the error of his mind,—a practical, affected, and voluntary ignorance. So though a man may sometimes judge that there is a goodness in the gospel and the things proposed, yet his affection to other pleasures, which he prefers before the gospel, causes him to shake off any thoughts of compliance with it. Now, all natural men in the irons of sin are not weary but in love with their fetters, and prize their slavery as if it were the most glorious liberty.

4. There is not only unfitness, and unwillingness, and a contrary affection to the gospel, but according to the degrees of this affection to other things, there is a strong aversion and enmity to the tenders of the gospel. This enmity is more or less in the heart of every unrenewed man; though in some it is more restrained and kept down by education, yet it will appear more or less upon the approaches of grace, which is contrary to nature. As a spark as well as a flame will burn, though one has less heat than the other, there is the same nature, the same seminal principles in all. The carnal mind, let it be never so well flourished by education, is enmity to God; and therefore 'unable,' because unwilling, 'to be subject to the law,' [Rom. viii. 7](#). By nature he is of the devil's party, and has no mind the castle of his heart should ever come into the hands of the right owner. It is in every faculty. Not one part of the soul will make a mutiny within against sin, or take part with God when he comes to lay siege to it; when he 'stretches out his hands,' he meets with a 'rebellious and gainsaying people,' [Rom. x. 21](#). It can converse with anything but God, look with delight upon anything but that which is the only true object of delight. It can have no desire to have that law written in his heart whose characters he hates. All the expressions in the Scripture denoting the work of grace, import man's distaste of it; it is to deny self, crucify the flesh. What man has not an aversion to deny what is dearest to him, his self; to crucify what is incorporated with him, his Isaac, his flesh? The bent of a natural heart, and the design of the gospel, which is to lay man as low as the dust, can never agree. A corrupt heart, and the propositions of grace, meet together as fire and water, with hissing. The language of man, at the proposals of the gospel, is much like that of the devils, 'What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?' [Luke iv. 34](#).

5. This aversion proceeds on to a resistance. No rebels were ever stouter against their prince than an unrenewed soul against the Spirit of God: not a moment without arms in his hand; he acts in defence of sin, and resistance of grace, and combats with the Spirit as his deadly enemy: 'You always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you,' [Acts vii. 51](#). The animosity runs in the whole blood of nature; neither the breathings of love, nor the thunderings of threatenings, are listened unto. All natural men are hewed out of one quarry of stone. The highest rock and the hardest adamant may be dissolved with less pains than the heart of man; they all, like a stone, resist the force of the hammer, and fly back upon it. All the faculties are full of this resistance: the mind, with stout reasoning, gives a repulse to grace; the imagination harbours foolish conceits of it; in the heart, hardness and refusing to hear; in the affections, disgust and displeasure with God's ways, disaffection to his interest; the heart is locked, and will not of itself shoot one bolt to let the King of glory enter. What party is like to be made for God, by bare nature thus possessed? Nature indeed does what it can, though it cannot do what it would; for though it resist the outward means and inward motions, yet it cannot efficaciously resist the determining grace of God, any more than the matter of the creation could resist the all-powerful voice of God commanding it to receive this or that form, or Lazarus resist the receiving that life Christ conveyed to him by his mighty word. God finds a contradiction in our wills, and we are not regenerate because our will has consented to the persuasions of grace; for that it does not do of itself; but the grace of God disarms our will of all that is capable to make resistance, and determines it to accept and rejoice in what is offered. Nature of itself is of an unyielding temper, and removes not one scale from the eye, nor any splinter from the stone in the heart; for how can we be the authors of that which we most resist and labour to destroy?

6. Add to all this, the power of Satan in every natural man, whose interest lies in enfeebling the creature. The devil, since his first impression upon Adam, has had the universal possession of nature, unless any natural man free himself from the rank of the children of disobedience: [Eph. ii. 2](#), 'The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience;' where the same word "enengein" is used for the acting of Satan, and likewise for the acting of sin, in [Rom. vii. 5](#). as it is for the acting of the Spirit, [Philip. ii. 13](#). In whom he works as a spirit as powerfully according to his created strength, as the Holy Ghost works in the children of obedience. As the Spirit fills the soul with gracious habits to move freely in God's ways, so Satan fills the soul (as much as in him lies) with sinful habits, as so many chains to keep it under his own dominion. He cannot indeed work immediately upon the will, but he uses all the skill and power that he has to keep men captive for the performance of his own pleasure: [2 Tim. ii. 26](#), 'Who are taken captive by him at his will,' or for his will, "Eis to ekeinou thelema". It is in that place a dreadful judgment which God gives some men up to for opposing the gospel, taking away his restraints, both from the devil and their own hearts, but more or less he works in every one that opposes the gospel, which every unrenewed

man under the preaching of the gospel does, he is the strong man that keeps the palace, [Luke xi. 21](#). Can the will of man make a surrender of it, at God's demand, in spite of his governor? What power have we to throw off these shackles he loads us with? We are as weak in his hand as birds in a fowler's. What will have we, since we are his willing slaves? The darkness of nature is never like by its own free motion to disagree with the prince of darkness, without an overpowering grace, able to contest with the lord as well as the slave; for by the fall he is become prince of the lower creation, and holds it in chains too strong for weakness to break. How great, then, is man's inability! How unreasonable is it to think that the will of man possessed with such unfitness, unwillingness, affection to other things, aversion to the gospel, resistance of it, and in the devil's net, can of itself do anything towards its recovery, from that it counts no disease; or to turn to that which it accounts its burden? If unspotted and sound nature did not preserve Adam in innocence, how can filthy and craze nature recover us from corruption? If it did not keep him alive when he was living, how can it convey life to us when we have not a spark of spiritual life in us? Man was planted a 'noble vine,' but turned himself into 'a degenerate plant;' nothing that has decayed can by its own strength recover itself, because it has lost that strength whereby it could only preserve itself.

1. Man cannot prepare himself for grace.
2. He cannot produce it.
3. He cannot co-operate with God in the first work.
4. He cannot preserve it.
5. He cannot actuate it.

1. Man cannot prepare himself for the new birth.

I shall premise a few things for the better understanding of this,

(1.) Man has a subjective capacity for grace above any other creature in the inferior world; and this is a kind of natural preparation which other creatures have not. A capacity in regard of the powers of the soul, though not in respect of the present disposition of them. A stone or a beast are not capable of habits of grace, no more than of habits of sin, because they want rational natures, which are the proper seats of both. Our Saviour did not raise trees or stones to life, though he had the same power to do that as he had to raise stones to be children to Abraham; but he raised them that had bodies prepared, in part, for a receptacle of a soul. As there is a more immediate subjective capacity in a man newly dead for the reception of life upon a new infusion of the soul, because he has all the members already formed, which is not in one whose body is mouldered into dust, and has not one member organised fit for the acting of a rational soul. These faculties have a spring of natural motion in them, therefore are capable of divine grace to make that motion regular; as the wheels of a clock out of order retain their substance and their motion if their weights be wound up, but a false motion unless the disorder of the spring be mended. Man has an understanding to know, and, when it is enlightened, to know God's law; a will to move and run, and, when

enlarged by grace, to run the ways of God's commandments; so that he stands in an immediate capacity to receive the life of grace upon the breath and touch of God, which a stone does not, not the most sparkling jewel any more than the meanest pebble; for in this it is necessary rational faculties should be put as a foundation of spiritual motion. Though the soul be thus capable as a subject to receive the grace of God, yet it is not therefore capable, as an agent, to prepare itself for it or produce it; as a piece of marble is potentially capable of being the king's statue, but not to prepare itself by hewing off its superfluous parts, or to raise itself into such a figure. If there were not a rational nature, there were nothing immediately to be wrought upon. If there be not a wise agent and an omnipotent hand, there were nothing to work upon it.

(2.) Besides this passive capacity, there are more immediate preparations. The soul, as rational, is capable to receive the truths of God; but as the heart is stony, it is incapable to receive the impressions of those truths. A stone, as it is a corporeal substance, is capable to receive the drops of rain in its cavities; but because of its hardness is incapable to suck it in, and be moistened inwardly thereby, unless it be softened. Wax has a capacity to receive the impression of the seal, but it must be made pliable by some external agent to that purpose. The soul must be beaten down by conviction before it be raised up by regeneration; there must be some apprehensions of the necessity of it. Yet sometimes the work of regeneration follows so close upon the heels of these precious preparations, that both must be acknowledged to be the work of one and the same hand. Paul on the sudden was struck down, and in a moment there is both an acknowledgement of the authority of Christ, and a submission to his will, when he said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' [Acts ix. 6](#). The preparation of the subject is necessary, but this preparation may be at the same time with the conveyance of the divine nature: as a warm seal may both prepare the hard wax, and convey the image to it, by one and the same touch.

(3.) Though some things which man may do by common grace may be said in some sort to be preparations, yet they are not formally so, as that there is an absolute causal connection between such preparations and regeneration. They are not *causae dispositivae* of grace, not disposing causes of grace. Grace is all in a way of reception by the soul, not of action from the soul. The highest morality in the world is not necessary to the first infusion of the divine nature. Mary Magdalene was far from the one, yet received the other. If there were anything in the subject that was the cause of it, the most tender and softest dispositions would be wrought upon, and the most intelligent men would soonest receive the gospel. Though we see them sometimes renewed, yet many times the roughest tempers are seized upon by grace; and the most unlikely soils for fructifying God plants his grace in, wherein there could be no preparations before. It is not with grace as it is with fire, which gives as much heat to a stone as to a piece of wood; but the wood is sooner heated than the stone, because it is naturally disposed, by the softness and porousness of its parts, to receive the

heat. Moral nature seems to be a preparation for grace; if it be so, it is not a cause howsoever of grace, for then the most moral person would be soonest gracious, and more eminently gracious after his renewal, and none of the rubbish and dregs of the world would ever be made fit for the heavenly building. There seems to be a fitness in morality for the receiving special grace, because the violence and tumultuousness of sin is in some measure appeased, the flame and sparks of it allayed, and the body of death lies more quiet in them, and the principles cherished by them bear some testimony to the holiness of the precepts. But though it seems to set men at a greater nearness to the kingdom of God, yet with all its own strength it cannot bring the kingdom of God into the heart, unless the Spirit opens the lock. Yea, sometimes it sets a man further from the kingdom of God, as being a great enemy to the righteousness of the gospel, both imputed and inherent, which is the crown of the gospel: to imputed, as standing upon a righteousness of their own, and conceiving no need of any other; to inherent, as acting their seeming holiness neither upon gospel principles, nor for gospel ends, but in self-reflections and self-applauses. What may seem preparations to us in matters of moral life, may in the root be much distant and vastly asunder from grace; as a divine of our own illustrates it, two mountains whose tops seem near together may in the bottom be many miles asunder. The foundation of that which looks like a preparation may be laid in the very gall of bitterness; as Simon Magus desiring the gift of the Holy Ghost, but from the covetousness of his heart. Other operations upon the soul which seem to be nearer preparations, as convictions, do not infer grace; for the heart, as a field, may be ploughed by terrors, and yet not sown by any good seed. Planting and watering are preparations, but not the cause of fruit; the increase depends upon God.

(4.) There is no meritorious connection between any preparation in the creature and regeneration. The Pelagian opinion was, that by a generous love of virtue we might deserve the grace of God, and the farther assistance of the Spirit, we first (say they) put our hearts into the hands of God, that God may incline them which way he please; and by thus making our wills depend on God, we merit help from God, and make ourselves worthy of him. Whether this be the opinion of any now, I know not. This is to assert, that man gives first to God, and then God to man in way of requital. What son can merit to be born? What desert before being? Nothing can be pre-existent in the son which merits generation by the father. The fair hand of moral nature more induce God to confer on man the state of grace, than the deed of conveyance of a manor, fairly drawn, can dispose the lord to pass it away. In what part of Scripture has God indulged mere nature with any promise of adding grace upon the improvements of natural abilities? Whatsoever conditional promise there is, supposes some grace superior to nature in the subject as the condition of it. We do not find that God has made himself a debtor to any preparation of the creature.

But there is no obligation on God by anything that may look like a preparation in man. For,

[1.] If man can lay any obligation on God, it must be by some act in all parts his own, for which he is not in the least obliged to God. Thinking is the lowest step in the ladder of preparation. It is the first act of the creature in any rational production, yet this the apostle does remove from man, as in every part of it his own act: [2 Cor. iii. 5](#), 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' The word signifies reasoning. No rational act can be done without reasoning; this is not purely our own. We have no sufficiency of ourselves, as of ourselves, originally and radically of ourselves, as if we were the author of that sufficiency, either naturally or meritoriously. And Calvin observes that the word is not "autarkeia" but "hikanotes", not a self-ability, but an aptitude or fitness to any gracious thought. How can we oblige him by any act, since, in every part of it, it is from him, not from ourselves? For as thinking is the first requisite, so it is perpetually requisite to the progress of any rational act, so that every thought in any act, and the whole progress, wherein there must be a whole flood of thoughts, is from the sufficiency of God. We cannot oblige God after grace, much less before, for when grace is given there must be constant effluxes of grace from God to maintain it; and the acts of grace in us are but a second grace of God. How can we then oblige him by that which is not ours, either in the original or improvement? If when a man has given to another a rich gift he must also give him power to preserve it, and wisdom to improve it, the person cannot be said by his improvement of it to oblige the first donor. What has any man that he has not received? [1 Cor. iv. 7](#). The apostle excludes everything in us from the name of a donation to God. If there be no one thing but is received from God, then no preparation to grace but is received from him. The obligation then lies upon the receiver, not upon the donor. But may we not oblige God by the improvement of such a gift? The apostle includes everything, challenges him to name any one thing which was not received, which will contain improvements as well as preparations. If we have power to improve it, wisdom to improve it, hearts and opportunities to improve it, all these are by way of reception from God.

[2.] If man can lay any obligation upon God, it must be by some pure, spotless act. This cannot be; no pure act can spring from man. God has taken an exact survey of the whole world in its dark and fallen state, and could not, among those multitudes of acts which spring from the will of man find one piece of beauty, one particle of the divine image, for he has pronounced this sentence upon them, with repetition, too, as his infallible judgment: 'There is none righteous no, not one: they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one,' [Rom. iii. 10-12](#). The most refined nature derived from Adam was never found without fault, a pure virtue is a *terra incognita*. The productions of nature are always evil. If not one action be fully good in the nature of man, what meritoriousness can there be in any preparation of nature for the grace of God? Can the clearest virtue that ever was since Adam oblige God to pardon its own de-

fects, that is, the defects of that very act of virtue? Much less can it challenge a higher degree of grace to be transmitted to it.

[3.] If any preparation were our own, and were pure, yet being natural, how could it oblige God to give a supernatural grace? If there be anything of meritoriousness, it is only something of the same kind with the work in a greater degree, but there is no proportion between natural acts and supernatural grace. There is no one scripture, or one example, declaring grace to be given as a reward to mere nature, or any act of nature. God indeed, out of his infinite righteousness, and equity, and goodness, has rewarded some moral acts with some worldly advantages, or the withdrawing some judgments threatened, as Ahab's reprieve from judgment upon his humiliation, [1 Kings xxi. 27, 29](#); and the temporary pardon to Nineveh, upon their submission to the prophet's threatenings, [Jonah iii. 8-10](#). But what obligation lies upon God to reward men doing thus with super-additions of grace? for there is no proportion between such a moral act and so excellent a reward. Are may as well say that a coal by glowing and sparkling may merit to become a star; or that the orderly laying the wood and sacrifice upon the altar might merit the descent of fire from heaven to kindle it.

[4.] If there was any obligation on God, by any preparations of nature, then such acts would be always followed with renewing grace. There would be an obligation on God's righteousness to bestow it. And if it should be denied, the creature might accuse God of a failure in justice, because he gave not what was due. God sure would observe that rule of justice which he prescribes to man, not to detain the wages of a hireling, no, not for a night. Were grace a debt upon the works of nature, God were then obliged not only to pay it, but pay it speedily, it being exact righteousness so to do. But we see the contrary. Publicans and harlots are raised and beautified, while pharisees lie buried in the ruins of nature. These preparations are many times without perfection. The pangs of conviction resolve sometimes into a return to the old vomit, and make no progress in a state of life and grace. The apostle's rule will hold true in the whole compass of the work, [Rom. vi. 11](#), 'If it be of works, then it is no more grace.' So much as is ascribed to any work or preparation by the creature, so much is taken from the glory of grace, and would make God not the author, but assistant, and that too by obligation, not by grace.

[5.] From this it follows, that man does not prepare himself by any act of his will, without the grace of God. What preparation can he make, who is so powerfully possessed by corrupted habits, which have got so great an empire over him, struck their roots to the very bottom of his soul, entrenched themselves in the works of custom, that if he goes about to pull up one, his arm shakes and his heart faints? How strongly do these rooted habits resist the power of grace! How much more easily do they resist the weakness of nature in confederacy with them! What is said of the remnant of Jacob as a 'dew from the Lord,' as 'the showers upon the grass,' that it 'tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men,' [Micah v. 7](#), may

be said of the grace of God, it waits not for the preparations and dispositions of the creature, but prevents them. It is a pure gift; though we are active with it, yet we are wholly indisposed for it. We can no more prepare ourselves to shine as stars in the world, than a dunghill can to shine as a sun in heaven. What preparations does God wait for in the heart of an infarct when he sanctifies it? If 'without Christ we can do nothing,' [John xv. 5](#), then no preparations without Christ; for they are something, and very considerable too. There is no foundation to think there should be any preparation in the creature, as of the creature.

First, The first promise of redemption and regeneration intimates no such thing in man to either of them: [Gen. iii. 15](#), 'I will put enmity,' &c. The putting enmity into man against Satan is promised by God as his own work. There was a friendship struck up, a confederacy made, the devil entertained as a counsellor; God would now break this league, he only puts enmity into the heart against Satan: 'It shall bruise thy head,' &c. The bruising the serpent's head is wholly the act of Christ. *It*, not the man or the woman, but the promised seed. As there were no preparations in the creature to that which Christ acted in the flesh, so there are no preparations in that creature for what Christ is to do in his Spirit. He bruised Satan in his flesh upon the cross without any preparations in the creature; and so he bruises Satan in the heart, by his Spirit, without any preparations on the creature's part. For anything I see, had man in the state of innocence been sensible that his dependency, as to any good, and motion to good, ought to be upon God, and he to have waited upon God for his change and confirmation, he might have stood; but when he would practically assert the liberty of his own will in a way of indifference to good and evil, he fell. And by the way, those that assert the freedom of their own will naturally, without the grace of God, either common or special, seem to me to justify Adam's first affected independence of God.

Secondly, God is as much in the new creation as he was in the old. Not only the creation of the matter, but the preparation of it to receive the form, was from God; neither the matter, nor any part of it, prepared itself. If nothing prepared itself to be a creature, how can anything prepare itself to be a gracious creature, since to be a new creature is more than to be a creature; and every preparation to be a new creature is more than any preparation to be a creature? The new creation differs, I must confess, from the old creation; but it is such a difference which makes it rather harder than easier.

First, The object of the old creation was nothing, the object of the new is something; but a thing that has no more active disposition to receive a new form, than nothing had.

Secondly, The object of the first creation was a simple and pure privation; the object of the second is a contrary form, which resists the work of God: there was only an action of creation in the first, there is an action of destruction in the second, the destruction of the old form and the creation of a new. Is it likely that any nature would voluntarily prepare itself for its own destruction? God in the first creation found no disposition in the subject to entertain a form, here he finds a contrary disposition to resist the form.

Thirdly, What preparation had any of those we read of in Scripture from themselves? What disposition had Paul, when he was struck down with a heart fuller of actual enmity than he had at his birth? Did the apostles expect any call from their nets, or set themselves in a readiness before they heard that call? A voice from Christ was attended with a divine touch or power upon their hearts; both the preparation and the motion itself took birth together. And what preparations are there in Scripture, but are attributed unto God? If a conviction be thorough and full, and consequently a preparation, it must refer to that Spirit which our Saviour asserts to be the principal cause of it, [John xvi. 8, 9](#), 'When he is come,' that is, the Comforter, 'he will reprove the world of sin.' It is laid wholly upon this, as the end of the almighty Spirit's coming, whereby it is not likely men would be convinced without him. Is there any desire or prayer for it? Even this, if true, is from the Holy Ghost; 'no man can call Christ Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' [1 Cor. xii. 3](#). Did any of those our Saviour cured of bodily infirmities, prepare themselves for that cure? Neither can any man prepare himself for his spiritual cure.

Fourthly, What thing in all the records of nature ever prepared itself for a change? All preparations in matter for receiving any form arise not from the matter itself, but from some other active principle, or the new form in part introduced, which by degrees expels the old; as in water, when heat comes in the place of cold, the preparation is not from the water, but from the new quality introducing itself. The grace of God is to the soul as form is to matter. The body is formed in the womb, for the reception of the soul, but not by the embryo, but by the formative virtue of the parent, fashioning the parts of the body to make it a fit lodging for the soul; or, as some think, the soul itself, as the bee, fashions its own cell; but howsoever it is not from itself. The preparations of Lazarus to rise were from the voice of Christ, not from the stinking body of Lazarus. The nature of all is alike. That one lute is better prepared for an harmonious touch, is from the musician's skill, not any art of its own. If one man of the same nature with another be endued with rich morals, it is from the common grace of God exciting natural light, and the common notions of fit and just; as the reason one vine of the same kind brings forth more generous fruit than another, is from the stronger influence of the sun. All nature assents to this truth, that nothing does prepare itself for a change.

Fifthly, If man did prepare himself for grace, it would be a disparagement to God, it would violate the sovereignty of God. It would be derogatory to the majesty of God to have his grace depend upon the conditions and previous preparations in the creature; it would lay the foundations of grace in a man's self, and impose a necessity in God to come in with further grace, and make his actions dependent upon the actings of the creature. The beginning of faith would be from us, and the supplement from God; the work of grace would be of him that 'wills and runs,' and not 'of God that shows mercy,' [Rom. ix. 16](#). It would change the whole tenor of the Scripture, and make conversion not God's drawing of us, but our traction of God; for he that does dispose himself to grace, is in some sort the cause of that

grace, as he that does dispose the subject for such a form is in a sort the cause of that form. If the preparations were from the will of man, man would begin the noblest work that ever was wrought, and God would be made no more than an attendant upon the creature's motion; whereas the very beginning in the will, as well as the perfection, is ascribed to God: [Philip. ii. 13](#), 'God works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' God's good pleasure is the original cause of this work upon the will, not the will's good pleasure. The work then depending on God's good pleasure, excludes any dependency on the will of man; it is therefore called a creation, to show God's independence upon anything as to this work.

Sixthly, Where should this preparation begin? in what part of the soul? Shall it begin in the understanding? That has lost the reins whereby it governed the lower parts of the soul. Nothing is more discomposed in its acts than that faculty. It is well compared to a charioteer or coachman fallen from his box, and his feet entangled in the reins of the horses, which hurry him about. The sensitive appetite, like a wild horse, has got the bit between his teeth, runs about, and draws the understanding after it. Indeed a charioteer that has lost the government of his horses endeavours to remedy that violence; he cries out, makes all resistance, has a will to help himself; but the understanding is so far from resisting, that it takes pleasure in the disorder of the passions; it prompts the will to follow them, and this is properly to be a servant to sin. Shall it begin in the appetite? How can that incline to range itself to the order of reason? It has no reason itself; it submits not to the laws of reason; it has got the mastery of it, and has prescription for its dominion, of a long standing, ever since the fall. The dominion of sin is in the understanding, will, appetite, whence all of them are called flesh, so that all the motions of the soul depending upon them, the slavery must needs be voluntary. Therefore neither the understanding conceives, nor the will wills, nor the appetite desires, anything against themselves; how, then, should the will, which is captivated by a corrupt understanding and disorderly affections, recover itself, when it must necessarily be under the guidance of one of these jailers? Suppose the understanding were illuminated, are those evil habits in the will corrected barely by the illumination of the understanding? If they are corrected, why does not the will always follow the dictate of the understanding? But, alas! those evil habits determine the will to evil, as good habits determine it to good; for it is the nature of habits to incline the faculties to those things which are suitable to the nature of those habits; therefore as long as it remains under the command of those evil inclinations, it is impossible it should pass from evil to good. But that the will has evil inclinations, appears by the Scripture calling the whole man flesh; else corruption would not be universally seated in the soul, but only accidental in the will, from the darkness of the understanding. But certainly, as Adam in innocence had an habitual holy disposition in his will, so man, in his fall, has a corrupt inclination in his will, an habitual quality, whereby he drinks iniquity like water, [Job xv. 16](#). What power of the will can take those cords off, which hold it prisoner, whereby it must be prepared for a free motion?

To evidence this further, we shall consider,

1. That man does not naturally, neither can, understand the new birth.

2. He cannot desire it. Understanding and desire are necessary preparations to any rational change a creature can make in itself.

1. Man cannot understand it. This is necessary to a change. Whatsoever is done by the will, must be done by the impulse of some other faculty. Sensitive appetite cannot instruct the will to this work. Sense is not capable of reason, much less of religion, though it be the portal to both. The will can never be moved to any good thing, unless the mind propound it as good and amiable. The act of thinking must precede the act of believing, for we cannot believe without thinking of what we believe. It is less to think than understand. If we cannot, then, do that which is less in the preparation, we cannot do that which is greater, especially when it is impossible to will without thinking; and thinking is a necessary means to willing. He that cannot prepare himself for a good thought, how can he prepare himself for a gracious habit? What ability have we to the act of faith, when we have no ability to any thought of faith? We cannot by the strength of nature understand it, if we consider,

(1.) The first blot caused by sin was upon the understanding. Man was first deceived by the sophistical reasonings of the serpent. The first effect of sin was to spread a thick darkness upon Adam's understanding. Though the whole house, and every beam of it, fell together, yet this faculty was first unfastened, and brought all the rest to ruin. As soon as ever he ceased from glorifying God as God, a darkness was brought upon his foolish heart: [Rom. i. 21](#), 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,' where the apostle describes the state of man in corrupt nature after his fall. Folly first in the heart to desire the forbidden fruit, and then darkness came upon the understanding. Their "dialogismoï", their reasonings, became empty and contradictory; their primitive light departed, and darkness, as a privation, took place. What true motion can there be in the will, when there was so thick an obscurity in the understanding? Where there is but a false knowledge in the mind, there can be no true motion in the will. There must then be a restoration of this light, before there can be any preparation to a good act of the will. Adam recovered not this light by his own strength, no, nor by the outward declaration of the gospel in the promise; for no outward object proposed to the understanding confers any power upon the faculty. How can it then be recovered by our strength, since we have rather added to the scales than diminished them? For,

(2.) There is a darkness transmitted from him to the understanding of every man by nature. The light is darkened in the heaven of the soul, the more spiritual part of the mind, [Isa. v. 30](#), as the prophet speaks in another case. Our understandings are so closed up with the thick slime of sin, that we cannot see the beauty of gospel truths; 'darkness comprehends not the light,' [John i. 5](#). Though the light of the sun did shine a thousand times brighter than it does, and strike upon the face and eyelids of a man with the greatest glory, yet if there be

a spot upon the apple of his eye, if he scants a seeing faculty, he can apprehend nothing of it. Hence the apostle prays for the illumination of the understanding of the Ephesians, chap. i. 17, 18, and that they might have 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.' And our Saviour tells them that they 'must be taught of God,' [John vi. 45](#), by an internal teaching of the Spirit, as well as by himself in an oral instruction. What a thick cloud was upon Nicodemus his mind, when he discoursed with him about regeneration, who was the ablest teacher to illustrate it to his fancy and understanding! It is not such a darkness as if he might understand the mysteries of heaven, if he would exert the strength of his own reason. This would be only as a man shutting his eyes who had a visive faculty; but it is such a darkness as cannot be expelled by flesh and blood, or anything arising from it: 'Flesh and blood,' says our Saviour to Peter, 'has not revealed it unto thee, but my, Father which is in heaven,' [Mat. xvi. 17](#). Flesh and blood includes everything in opposition to God. Our Saviour had externally owned himself, in the face of the Jews, to be the Messiah, the Son of God; but besides this, there was an inward illumination granted to Peter, for the apprehending and embracing so great a truth. There is not only a darkness upon the minds of those who have no outward revelation of the will of God in Christ, but upon those who are in the midst of the sunbeams: [Deut. xxix.](#), 'Yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' They wanted not the beams. No people in the world had the ordinances of God besides them; but they wanted an organ fitted to receive and use them, which was not in their power, but is mentioned as the gift of God. God promises to make his people to know his ways. What needs that, if they could know them without him? We have indeed the light of the gospel, we have also a faculty, but without an eye disposed for the light, Ye enjoy no benefit by it. Now who ever heard that darkness could prepare itself for its own expulsion? It cannot comprehend the light, much less prepare for the reception of it. Now who ever heard of one born blind, in a capacity to prepare himself for sight? We are blind in naturals, much more in spirituals. The most polished reasons among the heathens, both for knowledge in naturals and prudence in civil affairs, coated, and with all their wisdom knew not God.

(3.) There is an unsuitableness and a contrariety in the mind of man to the gospel, which is the instrument of regeneration. There is a mighty distance between the spiritual object and the natural faculty. The understanding, though never so well furnished with natural stuff, is but natural, and flesh; the object is supernatural and spiritual; therefore the richest mere nature can no more attain to the knowledge of spiritual things, than the clearest sense can attain to the knowledge of rational. Though every man 'by nature has the things contained in the law,' [Rom. ii. 14, 15](#), yet no man has by nature the things contained in the gospel. The gospel has not the same advantage in the hearts of men as the law has, for it finds nothing of kin to it. Though a natural heart has some broken pieces of the law of God deposited in it, yet there is not the least syllable of Christ or regeneration written in the mind by the hand

of nature. The understanding therefore naturally cannot prepare itself for the reception of the gospel, because it has not any principle in it which suits the doctrine of it. It seems a ridiculous thing to the wisest carnalist, who receives not the things of God, because, out of the pride of natural wisdom, he counts them foolishness, [1 Cor. ii. 14](#). Hence not many wise are renewed in their minds. Had the gospel truth been as agreeable to reason as the other common notions imprinted in man, it would have been preserved in the world longer than it was, since, without question, Adam did communicate to his posterity the notion of a redeemer, which did soon die among them, because not consonant to that reason they had derived by nature from Adam. It was a knowledge given to Adam by revelation, not imprinted in his nature by creation. Besides, there is a contrariety in the mind to the truth of the gospel. As we say of liberty, so of enmity. Though it be formally in the will, yet it is radically in the understanding. The mind is the seat of those hostile principles which act the will against God, [Rom. viii. 7](#). The mind of man regards the things of God as unpleasant, and an intolerable yoke and hard bridle. Let light, the most excellent thing in the world, glare upon a man that has sore eyes, he will turn away from it, or shut his eyes against it; for though he understands the worth of it, yet it has a quality offensive to him. So is the gospel to those notions settled in the distempered mind. Men give not credit to the declarations of the gospel; 'Who has believed our report?' has been the voice of God's messengers in all ages, [Isa. liii. 1](#). No man, unless known by all never to speak truth, but is more believed than the God of infallible and unerring truth! What principles, then, are there in the understanding to prepare it for the reception of that which is so contrary to its ancient inmates?

(4.) Besides this, the natural levity of the understanding does incapacitate it to prepare itself. It is with the understanding as with a line, the farther it is stretched out the weaker and more wavering it is. So is the understanding, being at a distance from God. How do vain thoughts intrude into the mind! No man can keep a door locked against them. We feel them rushing upon us while we endeavour to avoid them. We are confounded and overwhelmed by them, and drawn to things against our own resolutions. Man has not the command of his own heart, so much as to think steadily of a divine object. How can he then prepare his own heart, when he cannot without grace fix in any holy meditation which is necessary for the renewal of it, since nothing is more discomposed in its acts than the mind of man, which is always dancing about, like cork in the water, or feathers in the air? Whence should come any preparation to good orders but by some supernatural ballast, to establish it from fluctuating? This disease every man is sensible of, and whatsoever disease is inherent in nature cannot be cured by any preparations by that nature which is wholly overgrown with it.

(5.) Hence it follows that a natural mind has no right notion of grace. To the right notion of a thing is required suitableness, pleasure, and a fixedness of the mind upon it. A natural mind wants all these. How can it then prepare itself for that which it has no knowledge of?

And without knowledge it cannot commend it to the will. The apostle asserts a plain *cannot* in this business: [1 Cor. ii. 14](#), 'He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Being destitute of the Spirit, they cannot discern the things of the Spirit. Sense can discern things sensibly, not rationally. Reason can discern things rationally, but not spiritually. The light whereby a natural man judges of the things of the gospel is a star-light or a moonlight, which gives not a distinct view of the object. The evil disposition must be removed from the mind, before the object be entertained according to its worth. As if any natural object have such excellent qualities in it, that if it be embraced it will draw the will and affections after it; yet if the mind be ill-disposed, and does not judge of the object according to the merit of it, it will refuse it. Offer a man gold who understands not the worth of gold, it will not allure him. Man with his eyes is spiritually blind, and with his ears is spiritually deaf. So God calls the Gentiles, which were to be brought to Christ for a restitution of their eyes: [Isa. xliii. 8](#), 'Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.' Such can no more judge of the excellency of spiritual things than a blind man can have regular conceptions of colours, or a deaf man of the excellency of music. If 'no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' [1 Cor. xii. 8](#); if no man can have a magnificent conception and speech of Christ, but by the Spirit giving him both that conception and utterance, he cannot have a notion of the formation of Christ in the heart without the gift and impression of the same hand. What preparations, then, can arise from nature, when the mind can have no conception of Christ but by the Spirit of God?

Well, then, to conclude this. What preparations can there be in nature, since we cannot understand the things of God, when yet we have more clearness in our understanding to see them than we have force in our wills to love them and embrace them? It is in the understanding that the common notions, which are the grounds of knowledge, are deposited. There is less of ignorance in our understanding than of enmity in our will. The eye can see further than the arm can reach. If therefore we cannot think or understand, by all that help of common notions, without the grace of God, how can we then prepare our wills for it, to comply with it, and renew that faculty which is chiefly possessed with a contrariety to it?

2. As we cannot understand it, so we cannot naturally desire it. What is not spiritually discerned cannot spiritually be desired. Not but that according to those unformed conceptions which men have of it by common grace, there may be some weak velleities, but they are wishings without a will, not desires according to the value of the thing. Mercy first breathed on our first parents, before they breathed after that. The first motion came from God. So soon were they turned obstinate enemies against their Creator, without any thoughts of turning supplicants, though they had not lost the conceptions of their late integrity. which if they had, they had been wholly insensible, without any trouble of conscience. What desires can we naturally, then, have for it, who have far weaker conceptions of that happiness than they had immediately after they lost it? We cannot desire what we do not apprehend. A

beast cannot desire to be a man, because he has no conceptions of the excellency of the human nature above his own. No nature can ever affect that which is contrary to it. Do flesh can ever desire its own crucifixion. If we seek, we shall find; if we ask, we shall receive, but who first touches the heart to seek or to ask? If we cannot think a good thought of ourselves, how can we think so good a thought as a desire of regeneration? To say, then, we can desire the new creation of ourselves, without some kind of grace, is to assert another doctrine than what the apostle Paul asserted to those already regenerate. The first will, which is the necessary spring of all actions, is wrought by God, [Philip. ii. 13](#). The frame of man's will and desire stands to another point: [John viii. 44](#), 'The lusts of your father you will do.' The best renewed man 'knows not what to pray for as he ought,' without the instruction of the Spirit, [Rom. viii. 26](#). We cannot give our hearts a lift to heaven, or breathe out an unutterable groan, without the help of an infinite Spirit. The root of man's affections groves downward, not upward. What breathings can be expected in a soul choked up with sin? There was no motion of the church till 'the hand of her beloved was put in by the hole of the door,' and made a motion in her bowels, [Cant. v. 4](#). The church owed no obligation to her free will and her own predispositions. There is not a smoke in the heart to heaven without a spark first from heaven; not a step till God enlarges the heart. Velleities are from common grace, under the preaching, of the word, fervent and saving desires are from special grace, by the hand of the Spirit. So that there are no preparations from nature to this, since both our apprehensions of it and desires of it spring not out of that stock.

The second main thing is this, As man cannot prepare himself for it, so he does not produce and work it in himself. This is evident from the former. If he cannot make any preparation, which is the less, he cannot cause any actual production of it, which is the greater.

But to evidence it more, let us spend some time in this.

As it does not depend upon the will of man in the preparation, so neither in the production.

I shall evidence it, first, by arguments drawn from the consideration of God.

If this work depended upon the will of man, as the first cause in the production, it would deprive God,

1. Of his sovereign independence. If man's will were the first cause of regeneration, God would not be the supreme independent cause in the noblest of his works. This work is nobler than creation in respect of the price paid for it. The world was made without the death of anything to purchase the creation of it. But the divine image is not restored without the death of the Son of God, every line in this new image being drawn with his blood. Is there anything happens in the world but by the conduct and efficacy of his providence? Do all the motions of the heavens, the productions of creatures, the universal events of nature, depend upon the will, power, and wisdom of God? And shall the soul, the most excellent

of the lover creatures, bearing the characters of God's wisdom and goodness upon it (the acts of the soul in the way of religion, being the noblest acts it can produce), be left wholly to itself in the production and management of these? Shall God, the supreme cause in everything else, be an inferior and secondary cause in this affair? It is 'not he that plants, nor he that waters, but God that gives the increase,' [1 Cor. iii. 7](#). God is the first cause, upon whom man depends in all kind of actions, much more in supernatural actions, chiefly in the understanding and will, upon which faculties no creature can have any intrinsic influence to cause them to exercise their vital acts. If the will of man were the first cause, God would be an attendant to the creature in the noblest works. God would not then be the first mover, but man. The will willing would then be the cause of God's working, not God's working the cause of the will's willing and choice. God's working would be consequent upon the will, and so the effect of the will's free motion. Man would then be the *dispositiva causa* in relation to God. It would make God the second cause, and represent him expecting the beck, and the preparations of man, before he did exert any act. It would make God to will that which man wills, and make God to will that which man may reject. It would follow that God concurs not to regeneration by way of sovereignty, but by way of concomitance. It would not be a victorious but a precarious grace, which is against the whole tenor of the Scripture, which represents God as holding in his hands the first links of all second causes: [Rom. xi. 36](#), 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.' He is the first governor of all the wills and powers of the creatures, the first cause of all motions. He orders all, without being ordered by any. Now this is below the majesty of God, to be conducted in his motion by the will of the creature, to have the purposes of his goodness brought into act by an uncertain and slippery cause. How can it be conceived that God should put his hand to the more ignoble works of nature, and turn over the noblest work of the new creation to the airy will of the creature.

To conclude; God must either be precedent in his operation to the act of the will, or follow it. If precedent, we have what we would, if subsequent, then God is a mere attendant upon the motions of the creature, and a servant to wait upon man. This is to advance free will to the throne of God and depress God to the footstool of will; this is to deify the creature, by placing the crown of the sovereign independence of God on the head of free will.

2. It puts a blot upon the wisdom of God. If God expects the determination of the will of man, whether he shall act or no, then God is disposed by the will of man to the intention of his end. But it is very inconsistent with that unfathomable and unerring wisdom, to have the attainment of his end depend upon an agent wherein nothing is wrapped up but folly and madness, [Eccles. ix. 3](#). This is to make his power depend upon weakness, and his gracious ends towards his creature hang upon the extravagancies of one distracted, which no wise man would be guilty of. Is God in all things else a God of power and wisdom, working all things in number, weight, and measure, springing up every motion in the lower world, by

an unblameable counsel? And shall he leave the forming of the image of his Son, wherein his wisdom is most seen, to the slight irregular will of man, which has neither weight nor measure in itself? This would make the immutable counsel of God depend upon the mutability of the creature; which would be inconsistent with the wisdom of man, who chooses the firmest means he can for the conduct of his designs; for if man wills this day, then God wills, if man reject it the next day, then he rejects that which God wills. So God's will most be at uncertainty, according to the will of man. How shall his counsel stand upon so tottering a bottom? How shall he do all his pleasure if it were a mere dependent upon the pleasure of the creature, contrary to what he is pleased positively to assert: [Isa. xlvi. 10](#), 'My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure.' The apostle does couch these into arguments together: [Eph. i. 11](#), 'Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will;' he argues (1) from the power of God, 'who works all things', whereby our own works, and power, are excluded, and God asserted to be the supreme cause of everything, in an efficacious and energetical manner, as the word "energein" signifies. (2.) From his wisdom, 'according to the counsel of his own will,' wisely and justly, and therefore not according to ours, wherein there is nothing but folly and evil. This excludes all our own wills in the first work. Now, to assert that this beautiful image were brought forth upon the stage of the heart by the will of man, as the first cause, would destroy God's prerogative, and represent his operations under the conduct of our own counsel and will, not of his own. Certainly if there be a secret and wise Spirit of providence, running through the whole world to preserve his honour in his works, as certainly there is, the most honourable declaration of them in the heart cannot be thought to be left to the conduct of wild and hare-brained nature.

3. If the will of man were the prime cause of regeneration, it would deprive God of his foreknowledge and prescience; it would make that foreknowledge, which is certain and infallible, merely contingent. For if the will of man were wholly left to its own determination, the motions of the will were doubtful and uncertain, till the will does determine itself; and so God's knowledge of them would be uncertain, for it is clear, that from a thing wholly uncertain, there cannot arise a certain knowledge. Therefore, God could not be said certainly to foreknow the conversion of man, if the efficacy of grace depended upon so contingent a cause as the liberty of man's will; for then it might not be, as well as be; the will might not embrace it, and so the knowledge of God be but merely conjectural,—a knowledge unworthy of a deity, which must be supposed to be omniscient; a knowledge depending upon a peradventure, or at best, it is but a *very likely* it will be so. This would be a debasing the deity to an opinionative knowledge, which could not be certain, because depending upon so undetermined and wavering a cause. God cannot know this or that man's regeneration from eternity but he must see it infallibly in himself willing it, or in the causes of it, irresistibly producing it. But if the efficacy of grace depends upon the will, then God does not certainly determine the regeneration of man. And for God to foreknow that which he himself has

not determined, and when nothing in the creature, nor anything in the circumstances, does determine it, is to make God see that (as one says) which neither in the creature nor in himself is to be seen.

Obj. Some may object, How does God come to foreknow sin, for that depends upon the liberty of the will?

Ans. It would be too long to inquire into this, I shall only at present say this, it is certain God does foresee every sin, otherwise the evil acts of men could not be predicted. Our Saviour could not then have foreknown what the scribes and priests would do to him, as he does foretell: [Mat. xvi. 21](#), 'Christ began to tell them how many things he was to suffer of the chief priests and scribes.' And since God cannot fail in his predictions, but they will certainly come to pass, the hearts of the Jews could do no other thing, supposing the prediction, than what Christ does here foretell, for their wicked wills would certainly determine themselves that way. And God, by a concurrence of causes which he had linked together in his hand, orders things so, that meeting with the corruption in their wills, their wills determine themselves to such actions there foretold; yet is not God therefore the author of sin. For sin being no positive thing, cannot have an *efficient*, but a *deficient* cause; and God determines the withdrawing of his common grace, and the ordering of such and such circumstances, and so did foresee how a free creature, with that corruption in his heart, would determine himself in such occasions, when involved in such circumstances. But now in the work of regeneration, outward circumstances cannot cause any determination of the will, because those outward circumstances of grace meet with nothing in the heart full of corruption, to take part with them, which outward circumstances of sin do. Therefore since there can be no foresight of God in this case, depending upon the concurrence of outward circumstances, unless there were something in the heart which did suit them, the determination of the will cannot proceed from them, but from God himself, willing and determining the will by a positive influx of his grace. The determination of the will to sin comes from within, from its natural corruption concurring with such occasions, which, joining together, determine the will to it. Therefore God foresees what a free creature will do; but there being no principle in the will by nature to correspond with any gracious external circumstances, it cannot determine itself to grace, because it wants a principle of determination within itself, the corrupt habits determining it quite otherwise. Sin proceeds not so much from the liberty as the captivity of the will; and God knowing the corrupt frame, can foresee what man in such a frame will do upon occasion; as we may easily resolve that an habitual drunkard will be drunk when he has sensual objects placed before him.

4. Another consideration is this: to make the will of man the efficient of his regeneration, is to make the truth of God a great uncertainty.

(1.) First, In the covenant he made with Christ. If his having a seed depended upon the will of man, the promise of God to give him a seed might be null and void; for at least it

must be granted possible, that not one man under heaven would have accepted of his terms; and then his coming to save had been in vain, because there was a possibility that not one man would have embraced the salvation offered. Since the number of rejecters of him is greater than the number of receivers, it is likely the less number, if left to their own wills, would have followed the greater, since the prevalence of evil examples above good ones is every day evident. It had not been, then, '*the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,*' [Isa. liii. 10, 11](#), but *the pleasure of man shall prosper* in the hand of the will of man. The great resolve of God, the priesthood of Christ, the design of drawing a generation of persons out of the world to praise him, had hung upon a mere haphazard and a maybe, if it had depended only on man's will; and God should have waited the leisure of free will, to see whether the most glorious design that ever was laid should prosper, and whether he should have been a God of truth, or a liar to his Son. Though our Saviour had laid the foundation of our redemption in his own most precious blood, yet he must have depended on our will for the fruits of his purchase; it had been a great uncertainty whether he had seen one grain of fruit for all his expense. He might have been a king without one subject, or the destruction of one potent enemy he came to conquer, not one sin subdued, not one devil cast out of any son. This might have been; for though by God he was made a king, yet according to the other assertion, it depended on the will of man whether he should have one subject to own his authority; and, if so, God had been very unwise to enter into covenant with him, and Christ very unwise to come upon such grand uncertainties at the best, when it was a question whether any one person should have enjoyed the fruits of his death. How can it enter into any man's heart, that so great a contrivance as the sending of Christ to be the means of salvation, with such great promises to see the fruits of his death in a seed to serve him, should depend in the main fruits and effects of it on any thing undetermined by the will of God; that so great a weight should hang upon so thin a thread as the will of man?

(2.) In the promises he makes to men. How could God promise that so absolutely as he does, [Ezek. xxxvi. 26](#), 'A new heart will I give you,' if this work did depend upon the will of man, which might frustrate the truth of God in his promise? And when God knew there was no principle in their hearts that could rise higher than to shame and confusion, not to so excellent a work as regeneration, as is intimated, ver. 32, 'Not for your sakes do I do this: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel,' what reason was there for God to depress them to confusion, if they had had power to renew themselves? If this promise of God depended not upon any thing in them in the first making, it could not depend upon any thing in them in the full performance of it. We must either make God a liar, or unwise, or remove any efficiency in the will of man as the first cause. What blasphemy would it be to say, that God was so unwise as to promise that which depended upon the power of another, whether it should be wrought or no; that God could not be certainly true to his word, unless freewill assisted him!

5. It despoils God of his worship, in those two great parts of it, prayer and praise.

(1.) Prayer. With what face can any solicit God for that grace, which he conceives to be in his own power to have when he will? It is a mocking of him to desire that strength of him, which he has given us already, inherent in our nature. If it were the work of our wills, it would require only the excitation of them, not any application to God. Who begs for what he has? Who desires an alms that has thousands in his purse? As prayer would be a vain thing in any man that should deny a providence overruling the affairs of the world, so it would be as vain a thing to call upon God for grace, if the whole affair of regeneration were left to the conduct of man's will. The end of God's making promises of a new hearts and a new spirit, is to be inquired after to do it for us, [Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37](#). The natural consequent, then, of asserting the power of our own wills, is not to call upon God, but direct our desires to another cause, to solicit our own wills, not God. It would not be, then, according to the language of the church, 'Turn thou us, O Lord, and we shall be turned;' 'Draw me, and I will run after thee,' [Lam. v. 21](#), [Cant. i. 4](#), but, I will turn to thee, and then shalt thou be turned to me; I will run after thee, and draw thee to myself. The royal authority, and power of God, and his glory in granting, is the foundation of prayer; therefore the Lord's prayer is concluded with this, as an argument to move God to grant what is asked, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory;' that is, thou art rich and powerful, and hast all sorts of blessings to bestow. With what face can any one go to God with these words in his mouth, when he ascribes the kingdom, power, and glory, in so great a work, to his own will? We can never pray in confidence to God for it, for all confidence is wrought by a consideration of the will of him we pray to, to accomplish what we desire, and of his power to effect it. What confidence, then, can we have in his will particularly to work it for us, if we conceive he has left it to our hands, as the proper work of our own wills? This was the ground of our Saviour's supplications, with strong cryings and tears, that 'God was able to save him,' [Heb. v. 7](#): able naturally, in respect of his power, able morally, in respect of his truth to his promise. If God were careless in this concern, and had cast off all from his own hands, on the hand of free will, God might well say to and man, as he did to Moses, 'Why criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward,' [Exod. xiv. 15](#). Why cry you to me? You may do it yourselves. Go forward with your own wills. The natural language of man to God would not be, Lord, let thy kingdom come, thy will be done, give me a new heart; but, I will have thy kingdom come, I will have thy will be done, I will procure myself a new heart, I will change my heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

(2.) Praise. It does deprive God of this part of his worship also, praise even for his greatest blessings. If our own wills did produce this work, the greatest cause of glorying would be, not in God, but in ourselves. We have as little ground to praise God, if it be our own work, as we have to pray to him for it. All that can be said is, that we have ground to praise him for the means of regeneration; and this is no more ground than they have that are not regen-

erate under the enjoyment of the same means. If a man could give himself a natural being without God, he could be his own creator, his own foundation; so if he could give himself a spiritual being without the grace of God, he would be a god to himself; for in this case he would really do more to his conversion than God. If God offer grace equally to all, and the pliability of one man's will to receive it above another were from himself, he would then owe an obligation to himself, but no more to God than the other that rejected it owes. The apostle, by asking the question, 'Who Has made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou did not receive?' 1 Cor. iv. 7 (though it be meant of a difference of gifts, yet it is *argumentum a minori*), clearly implies, that what difference there was between them and others, was not of their own planting, nor grew up from the stock of nature. But if regeneration be wrought by a man's own will, it is not God that makes the difference, therefore the glory does not belong to him. He is the author of a general call, therefore the glory of that pertains to him, it is true; but yet as much from the damned that have lived under the gospel, as from the glorified saints in heaven, because the special entertainment of this call was not from the efficacy of God's grace, but the liberty of man's will; for, according to this assertion, the love of God would be equal both to the damned and saved, and would not shine with a fairer lustre in heaven than it does in hell. The apostle wishes the Philippians to 'work out their salvation with fear and trembling,' and encourages them by this argument, because God is the author of all that good which they do. If the determination of the will, then, is from itself, is it not a brave ground to glory in ourselves? How shall any man give God the glory of his salvation? If it be said, God did enlighten their understandings by the preaching of the gospel, this is an illumination common to all; and the reason some believe and others not, is not from the gift of God, but from themselves; how can we give God a peculiar praise for that wherein there is no difference between the best and the worst of men? But the apostle says, God gives us to will, that is, the operation of our will, and not only the illumination of the understanding; therefore, that our wills do terminate in that which is good, we hold of God; the apostle does not say, God has given us power to will, but produced the will in us, and that of his good pleasure. If, therefore, God work no more in one than in another, there is no place for God's good pleasure, because there is no difference. Let us see with what kind of language the praise of God would be clothed, according to the doctrine of free will. A renewed man may say thus: Lord, I give thee thanks, that thou hast conferred upon me a supernatural grace; but thou did also give as much grace to my neighbour, but I added something to that which thou did supernaturally give me; and though I received no more than he did receive from thee, yet I did more than he, since he remains in his sin, and I am regenerate; therefore I have no more obligation to thee and the grace, than he that believes not; for, Lord, thou did not make me differ from the other, because he had equal gifts with me; but I made myself to differ, because I superadded my own *velle* to thy divine assistance. How much of the glory of God would be pared off by such a half-witted praise as this! How

low would be the acclamations of glorified saints in heaven! What foundation of pride in the creature, contrary to the intendment of the gospel, which is chiefly to humble man, if man were the cause of the most excellent work in himself! It would write vanity in a great measure upon that excellent exhortation of the apostle, 'Let him that glories, glory in the Lord,' [1 Cor. i. 31](#), since there would be a bottom for flesh to glory in his presence, contrary to the design of God in his works, ver. 29, which is, 'that no flesh should glory in his presence.'

Arg. 2. The second sort of arguments is drawn from the nature and state of man.

1. In creation. Man did not create himself; to be a new creature is more than to be a creature. As man contributed nothing to nature, so neither can he contribute anything to grace, any more than a passive capacity in respect of faculties, which yet are the gift of God to him, nothing of his own acquisition. The soul, though framed with all its faculties, is as little able to engrave the image of God upon itself, as the body of Adam, formed with all its parts and members, was able to infuse a living soul into itself; there is no reason therefore to attribute our creation to God, and regeneration, the glory and excellency of a creature, to ourselves. I know such similitudes ought not to be strained too high; yet when this doctrine agrees with other parts of Scripture, we may form an argument from this metaphor of creation whereby regeneration is expressed in Scripture. It is confessed by most, if not all, that no creature, not an angel, can be an instrument in the very act of creation of another thing, much less the chief efficient of its own creation, for creation is an act of omnipotence, and an incommunicable property of the Deity, not to be delegated to any creature. The creation of man, in a state of such perfection as to be endued with the image of God, was a greater work than simply the creation of his body or the essential faculties of his soul, yea, greater than the creation of the whole world, because the attributes of God did more lively appear in him, and particularly his holiness. The restoration then of this righteousness to man, after it is lost, is a greater work than the first creation of his body and soul, it being the same thing with the conferring at first his original rectitude upon him. If man therefore could create this in his own soul after it is lost, he would do a greater work than simply the creation of a world. Surely there is as much power and wisdom required to the new creating righteousness in the heart, after it is perished, as there was in the placing it there at first; and then it will follow that none can new create it but an infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. If man therefore can create it in itself, he must have a wisdom, power, and holiness equal to that of God his first creator, for what could not be done by any creature at the first conferring it, but it was necessary that it should be a work of infinite power, cannot be done by a less power now, because the work is every whit as great; and no less power is requisite to a second creation of a thing after it is perished, than was necessary to the first creation of it, since this power of creation cannot be derived to any creature. As when life is gone from a fly, and the body of it dried and shrivelled up, all will grant that the restoring life to this fly must be done by an omnipotent power. The case is the same with us by nature, spiritual life, upon

the fall, was wholly fled, no good thing dwells in our flesh, [Rom. vii. 18](#), not one thing spiritually good, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, wholly flesh in every part of it. If the making a living fly or worm is above the power of nature, much more the creating of so glorious a fabric as grace in the soul. Man might as well have implanted the divine image in his soul at first, as restore it after it was lost. To ascribe such a power to man to raise himself is a greater power than Adam had by creation, because to restore a man's self from death to life is greater than to preserve the vital principle he has already, and act naturally from it.

2. In the state of innocence. Let us consider man in that, and it will appear he is unable to renew himself. If man did not keep himself up, with so great a stock of natural rectitude in paradise, how can he recover himself and that stock after it is lost? 'Man in his best estate is vanity; all Adam is all vanity.' In the estate of pure nature, he is vanity in respect of his mutability, much more vanity than in his fallen state, from the experience of which Adam rightly called his second son *Abel*, vanity, *Hebel*, the word used here. How soon did the breath of the serpent melt the impression upon him! And if he did not by his innocent will preserve that purity which he had received, how can he by his corrupt will recover that purity which he has lost? If Adam had had a will to preserve, he might have stood, but in losing his will he lost his power; if he did not maintain his will in his rectitude, nor (as some say) could not without the grace of God, how can he, by the mere force of his own will, restore that lost rectitude to himself? If an universal integrity stood in need of grace to preserve it, an universal depravation stands in need of a more vigorous force than that of our will to eject it. If Adam, who had no disorders in nature to rectify, did not stand by his own will, it is not likely that we, who have strong habits to conquer, can be restored by the strength of our own wills. What nature did not do when it was sound, it is not likely to do a greater thing when it is wounded. We cannot now have more power than Adam had in innocence; but he was not then endued with a power to regenerate himself if he should fall, but death was pronounced, both spiritual and eternal. If temptations corrupted him, and if he, being in a good condition, did not maintain himself in it, but pass from a good condition to a bad, how can we, by the only liberty of our will, pass into a good one? Are temptations less powerful now than before? Is the devil less vigilant to take all occasions to subvert us? Suppose our wills were not so evil as they are, would it not be more easy for the enemy to draw the will to himself, when it is unresolved between two parts, when the guide of it is so easy clouded, than it was to draw Adam's will to evil from that good to which he might readily have determined himself? Adam had the greatest advantages human nature, in a natural way, was capable of; he was created with a fullness of reason. But how long do we converse with sense, which fastens upon temptations, before we come to a use of reason! After we are come to some smatterings of reason, and a growth in it, as we think, what whisperings and impulses to sin do we feel! What an easiness to embrace incentives, a deafness to contrary

admonitions! What languishing, velleities, and palsy desires at best, for that which is good; a mighty mist and darkness upon our understandings, irresolution in our wills? How can we with all these fetters be able of ourselves to put ourselves into a better state, and act against nature, which is impossible any creature can do but by a superior power!

8. Consider man also in the state of corruption.

(1.) If the will of man by nature were the cause of regeneration, it would follow that corruption were a cause of regeneration. 'The imagination of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually,' [Gen. vi. 6](#). That which is evil, therefore, cannot be the cause of that which is man's greatest happiness. All actions are according to those innate qualities and habits which the agent has; all corrupted things act no otherwise than corruptly, because every act has no more in it than what the principle, which is the spring of the action, conveys to it. If the heart, then, be wicked, it cannot do anything but what is wicked, and a wicked act can never be the foundation of regeneration. If a corrupt man, as corrupt, can be the cause of regeneration, then he can act graciously, not only without a gracious habit, but by and from a corrupt habit. If the acts are corrupt, the product of them must be corrupt, for man, in renewing himself, must act either as corrupt or good. If as good, then he was renewed before he set about the renewing himself. The question will then be the same, How came he by that restoration to goodness? If as corrupt, then corruption is the spring of the noblest happiness of the creature. It would then follow that a man can perform acts of life before he lives; that vital acts may be exerted by dead principles; that sanctification can grow up from an unsanctified root; and that the will, with its old corruption, can be the cause of its elevation to another state, and that the old creature can perform a new creature's act before it be a new creature. Then a carnal mind, while it is carnal, may be subject to the law of God, which the Scriptures say it cannot be, [Rom. viii. 7](#). Then those that are in the flesh may please God in an high manner, by the renewing themselves. This would be more strange than if we should see a crab-tree bring forth pomegranates; a corrupt tree would then bring forth good fruit, and that the highest fruit, contrary to our Saviour's assertion, [Mat. vii. 18](#). It would follow that the stony heart would be the cause of the fleshly, and so an effect would rise from a cause quite contrary to it, and the complying principle in man be wrought by the resisting principle. It is as much as if the fire should cool, and the water burn, by their own innate qualities. If the will of man corrupted be the cause of principles of grace, then the old creature brings forth the new. The image of the devil is the cause of producing the divine nature, and hell the cause of an heavenly principle. It would follow that an act of one kind can be produced by an habit of a contrary nature, and that a man can act graciously before he be gracious. Before grace, no action is essentially good, because there wants a gracious principle, whence it must receive its denomination as good. One act, then, of corrupted man, or a multitude of acts, cannot be the cause of grace, because they all centre in that denomination of evil. How the acts of the will, whereof not one can be called good till

the will has a good principle, can produce so noble a work and habit as grace is, is not easily intelligible. Our being engrafted into the good olive tree is contrary to nature, [Rom. xi. 24](#). Nature cannot naturally contribute to that which is opposite to it. We are wild by nature, our new implantation is contrary to nature. A good nature, therefore, cannot be the natural effect of a wild nature.

(2.) Since corruption, the power of man is mighty weak in naturals and morals, much more certainly in spirituals.

[1.] In naturals. No natural body that lies under a grievous disease can repair itself by its own power without some external assistance. A wounded member must be beholding to oils and plants for a cure. No man can cast out a disease when he will. He may be sick when he will, by eating that which is contrary to nature; but the cure does not depend upon his will, but upon physic. Outward medicines must recover that which he lost by his own wilfulness. The will indeed is *conditio sine qua non*; there must be a will to use the means, or a man must be forced to use them, as we deal with madmen and children which are unwilling to take physic. But who ever heard of a man that could cure himself by his own will without the application of medicines? How can the soul then be restored to its vital integrity, by its own force? How can it change its own temper without some superior power operating upon nature? 'Man is like a wild ass's colt,' [Job xi. 12](#). What wild creature ever tamed itself? If any say that the will of man, by the use of outward ordinances, can cure itself, it is answered, Those ordinances are operative, not in a physical but moral way, and therefore such an efficiency as is in plants and drugs cannot be expected from them. There must be an operation of our own wills to make them efficacious. But what shall cure the will where the disease principally lies, and the love of the disease is seated? Who shall remove the beloved inclination from the will? Can nature cast out nature, or Satan cast out Satan? What can make us willing? When we are made willing, the cure is half wrought, as, when a madman is willing to be cured of his infirmity, you can hardly count him any longer mad. The evil principles in the will will never aim at their own destruction. If this work of regeneration were only the curing of a man that were sick or wounded, it could not be done by the power of man's will, but by the application of some external medicine, though nature did concur with it. But it is not a sickness but a death, therefore cannot come under the influence of the will of man in the first work. Shall a man have more power to cure his soul of mortal sins, than to cure his body of mortal wounds?

[2.] In morals. Whence comes that intemperance, incontinence, luxury, which overflows mankind, who are carried to those things which impair health, even in meats and drinks, against the reluctance of reason, whose will is led not by reason but appetite, and choose not like men but beasts, under the notion of pleasant and lustful? Is not this from the will conducted by appetite? The temperance and continence opposite to this is not in Scripture counted part of the extraction of nature, but the gift of God: [1 Cor. vii. 7](#), 'But every man

has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that,' speaking of continence. That which is God's gift is not merely the fruit of human will; for in the apostle's language they seem to be opposed, viz., to be from God, and from ourselves; to be God's gift, and yet our own. In [Eph. ii. 8](#) there is a plain antithesis, 'Not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' It is the same expression of that moral virtue of continence as it is of the divine grace of faith; 'it is the gift of God.' We are nothing in morals without God, no more than a beam is when the sun is clouded or withdraws its light. Shall we, then, allow a greater power to man in spiritual things than the Scripture does in morals? Shall the one be the gift of God, and the greater the acquisition of nature? Cannot the clay form itself into a vessel of moral honour? Shall it, then, be able to form itself into a vessel of grace? If we are not intrinsically sufficient of ourselves to exercise a moral act, since our natures are so overgrown with corruption, we are less sufficient of ourselves to exercise a supernatural act without a divine motion. Can anything assume an higher nature than what it originally has? Man has assumed a lower nature than that wherein he was created, which no creature besides him in this lower world has. Since he has brutified himself, and cannot moralise himself without common grace, how can he advance himself into a participation of the divine nature without special grace? How can man, so habitually evil, ascend up to an higher nature?

[3.] In this corrupt state of man, any one sin beloved will hold a man down from coming to God. It is impossible for a man, wedded in his heart to his riches, and bemired in earthly confidences, to enter into a renewed gospel state. 'How hard is it,' says our Saviour, 'for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!' [Mark x. 24, 25](#). This one corruption commanding in the heart, will hinder any resurrection by the power of nature, for on man's part Christ pronounces it impossible for such an one to enter into the kingdom of God, ver. 27, that is, into a gospel-state; and that upon the score of this single sin, which only appeared at this time in that young man. The like he pronounces of another sin, that of ambition: [John v. 44](#), 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?' That one fancy of the Jews, of a temporal conquering Messiah, did so possess their brains, that it barred the door against all the power of our Saviour's miracles; and the bare objective proposal of him, though unanswerable by reason, could not remove this rooted fancy. One sin in the will, has more power than any imagination in the fancy. When Adam disfigured his nature by one sin, he had no strength to recover himself, though his righteousness was but very lately fled from him. We need not question his recovery of it, had it been in the power of his will to will it, and the power of his nature to regain it. If one sin, then, in the will, is a bar against the power of nature, what are all those lusts which swarm in the heart of man, and swell up this lake of natural venom in the soul? If one fetter stakes down a man to an impotency and impossibility, how great is man's weakness under all those fetters which every day he loads himself with! One string about a bird's leg will keep it from flying away, much more many.

Arg. 3. Another sort of considerations, is from the state of man under the gospel.

1. If regeneration depended on the will of man, what is the reason more do not receive the gospel than are seen by us to receive it? If the faculty of believing were given to all, then all would believe upon the promulgation of the gospel, because the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation,' [Rom. i. 16](#). If it be the power of God in the outward preaching of it, then all would believe. If all do not believe, then some other secret power attends it, which makes it efficacious in one, not in another; it is 'to them that are saved' only, 'the power of God,' [1 Cor. i. 18](#); to others, though of great reason, foolishness. If the strength of arguments be the cause in one, what is the reason those arguments have not force upon another? What is that which makes the difference? All men have reason; and what is common reason does conduct all men more or less. If men could open the eyes of their mind to understand the excellency of gospel proposals, what is the reason that among those great multitudes to whom it is preached, so few in all ages have embraced it, though the things proposed are in themselves desirable, and suit so well, in respect of the blessedness promised, to the natural desire of man for happiness! When it was preached by the apostles! it was edged with miracles, attended with a remarkable holiness, yet they complained that few received their report. When in that age, and succeeding ages, men have been so far from receiving it, that they have scoffed at it, persecuted with all their fury the professors of it. It has been thus despised, not only by the meanest and blindest sort of people, but by men of the most elevated understanding among the heathen philosophers, that could pierce into the depths of nature; and by the Jews too, who had the Messiah promised to them, expected him about that time, had so many prophecies deciphering him, which all met with their accomplishment in his person; who were also amazed at the miracles he wrought in his life, and those which accompanied his death. Does not all this show the natural blindness of man, that there is need of some higher power to open his eyes, besides the objective proposal, that he may acknowledge the excellency of those things which are presented to him? Do we not find men ready to acknowledge reason upon other accounts, to be wrought into warm affections by pathetical speeches? Why are they not as ready in this, if it were in the power of their own understandings and wills? Do we not find the wills of men averse from it, though in their consciences they approve of the doctrines of it? What is the reason a man is renewed at one time, and not before, when he has heard the same arguments inculcated many a time? Many drops would not work it before, and one drop works it not in an instant. Is it from the power of reason in man? What reason is there, then, that he should be mastered by one reason now, who was not mastered by the same reason, and many more as strong, formerly? Whence comes that light into the mind? What is the reason such a man was not regenerate before, when he has in some fits meditated upon former arguments, and afterwards one effects it, by a secret insinuation, without any previous meditation, and a sudden turn of the will is wrought? Can this be supposed to be from the will principally? Rather from some divine spirit spreading itself over the soul, and opening the passages of it which were before shut. That place, [Mat. xi.](#)

21, where our Saviour speaks of the Tyrians and Sidonians, if the gospel had been preached to them, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, does not prove the power of man to renew himself, but that they would have testified some outward humiliation, as Ahab did at the threatening of Elijah; or rather, Christ exaggerates the hardness of the Jews' hearts in comparing them with the Tyrians in a hyperbolic manner of expression; as we do when we reproach a man for unmercifulness, we say, Had I entreated a Turk or barbarian as much, I should have bent him; not that we commend the humanity of the Turks, but aggravate the cruelty of those we have to do with. The proposal of an object is not sufficient without the inspiration of a will, whereby that concupiscence which masters that faculty may be overpowered.

2. If regeneration were the fruit of man's will, what is the reason that men convinced by the preaching of the gospel, and under great terrors too, find themselves unable to turn to God? What is the reason they are not presently renewed? Would they be torn with such horrors, and bear about them such racks in their consciences? Would they fill heaven and earth with complaints, were it in their own power to make themselves such as God commands them to be? If this were found in the more ignorant sort of people, the reason then might be charged upon their want of knowledge; but men of great wits and insight are filled with those complaints when God begins to rebuke them. And such as have a great deal of grace, as David, when God charges sin upon him: [Ps. li. 10](#), 'Create in me a clean heart; renew in me a right spirit;' why should they solicit God for renewing grace, were it in the power of their own hand? Would any that fear God, as David did, mock him at such a rate, as to desire that of him which they are able to do without him? Were there a natural power in man to turn himself, why did not Judas, after his conscience lashed him, go to his Master's knees to desire pardon, rather than to the gibbet? He had long experience of the merciful disposition of his Master; had not grace given him to incline his will to such an act; yet Peter was turned after his denial of his Master, was there anything more by nature in him than in Judas? Or did Peter do that by the strength of his own will, which Judas did not do? No, the Scripture assures us, it was from the prevalence of Christ's prayer, a secret influence from Christ's look, stirring up that grace that was already in his heart; he might else have gone out cursing his Master as long as he had lived: 'No man can come to me, except the Father draw him,' says our Saviour; though he be convinced, there must be the Father's traction as well as conviction to complete the work. All drawing implies a resistance, or at least a heaviness and indisposition in the thing so drawn, to come of itself. There is much difference between the proposal of the object, and the cause of our entertaining it. The object is the final cause which puts us upon motion; the object moves the will as an end, but it gives no power to move. If a man hear of an alms to be distributed at such a place, and he knows he stands in need of it, and has a desire to go to receive it, this knowledge of the necessity of it will not give him legs to go, if he be lame and unable to go; and he that does go to receive the alms,

the desire to receive the alms puts him upon motion; but the intention of receiving the alms was not the efficient cause of that motion. If he had not had strength in him from some other cause than the alms, he could never have gone. Our motion to God must proceed from some higher cause than barely the proposal of the object, and a conviction by it.

4. Argument is drawn from the condition of the regenerate themselves. They are not able to rid themselves of the remainders of sin, much less can natural men of the body of sin. From the impotency after grace, we may rationally conclude a greater weakness in a natural man that has not one spark of grace within, to be blown up from any breathing of grace from without. The flesh lusts against the spirit in a regenerate man; how peaceably does it enjoy its dominion in a natural man, where there is no spirit to control it, and lust against it? Regenerate men 'cannot do the good they would,' and they 'do the evil which they hate,' [Rom. vii. 16, 19](#), though they have a law of grace in their mind, set up in contradiction to the law of sin in their members. How can a natural man then, do so good a thing as the renewal of himself, and the destruction of his sin, who has no will to the one nor hatred of the other, who has the law of sin flourishing in him, and delights to read the characters of it and perform the wills of the flesh! If there be such an inability in a renewed man, who has a relish of God and the goodness of the law, who has sin in part mortified, and cast out of the mind, to the members and suburbs, how much greater must the inability and resistance be when there is nothing but opposing flesh! What need the apostle issue out such heavy complaints: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' [Rom. vii. 24](#), if he had power in his own hands to free himself from this oppressing sin? If Paul, a living tree in God's garden, having both the root and sap of grace, be so wretched, so weak and unable to free himself from those suckers, how wretched then is a dead rotten stake, which has no spiritual root! How can he free himself from a total spiritual death, when this great apostle could not free himself from a partial spiritual death by all that stock of grace already received? If a good man finds it so laborious a task to engage against the relics of nature, and manage an open hostility against the wounded force of his sensual appetite, much more is it a difficult task for a natural man to row against the stream of unbroken nature, when the natural resistance is in its full strength, and the bent of nature standing point-blank against God. If a well-built and well-rigged ship, with her sails spread, can only lie floating upon the waves, and make no way till a fresh wind fills the sails, surely the rough timber that lies upon the ground can never fit and frame itself into a stately vessel.

5. It is against the whole order which God has set in the world, for any thing to be the cause of itself, or of a higher rank of being than what it has by nature. No effect is nobler than its cause; grace is more noble than nature. A seal cannot convey and other image than what is stamped upon itself, and no further than its own dimensions; neither can nature stamp anything of grace upon the soul, because it has no such image engraver on it by God. Nature, though never so perfect in its own kind, can never produce a thing of higher perfec-

tion than itself; a plant can never produce a beast, nor a beast a man, nor a man an angel. No natural quality can be changed in any subject by itself, but by the introduction of some other quality superior to it. The fire can never freeze while it is fire; water cannot part with its coldness without some superior acting upon it; and can those that are naturally bad ever become spiritually good but by an almighty power? No nature can exceed its own bounds, because nothing can exceed itself in acting. Whatsoever a natural man does is but natural, and can never amount to grace, without a change of nature and addition of a divine virtue. If any thing could rise above its own sphere, it would be stronger than itself. Nothing can never make itself something; the best apostle counts himself no better,—[2 Cor. xii. 11](#), 'I am nothing,'—and entitles grace the sole benefactor of all his spiritual good, [2 Cor. xv. 10](#). What thing ever gave itself its own shape? Every piece of art is brought into figure by the workman, not by itself. Conformity to Christ is a fruit of the election of God, not first of the choice of our own wills. [Rom. viii. 29](#), 'Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' The first link of the chain in the providential and in the gracious administration is in the hands of God. Hence in Scripture the gracious works in the soul run in the passive for the most part: 'Ye are justified, ye are sanctified;' not you justify or sanctify yourselves; though sanctification and purging and working out salvation is ascribed to them that have received grace and life, as acting afterwards for such ends, and producing such effects by the strength of grace received from God, and grace accompanying that first grace in its acts.

As we have proved that man by his own strength cannot renew himself, let us see whether he can do it by his additional capacities.

1. Man, by the help of instituted privileges, does not produce this work of regeneration in himself, without a supernatural grace attending them. Ordinances cannot renew a man, but the arm of God, which does manage them, edges them into efficacy, as the arm that wields the sword gives the blow. Means are the showers of heaven, but they can no more make the heart fruitful till some gracious principles be put in, than the beams of the sun, the dews of heaven, and the water pots of the clouds, can make a barren ground bring forth flowers, without a change of the nature of the soil, and new roots planted in it. All the spectacles in the world cannot cure a man's eyes, he must have a visible faculty to make use of them. Our faculty must be cured before we can exercise it about objects or use means proper to that faculty. All persuasions will not prevail with a dead man; the fairest discourses, the most undeniable arguments, the most moving rhetoric will not stir or affect him, till God take away the stone from the grave and raise him to life. The report of the prophets will do no good without the revelation of God's arm, [Isa. liii. 1](#), because all those things do not work in a physical way, as drugs and plasters, which attain their end without any active concurrence of the patient, but in a moral way; the will therefore and nature must first be charged before those can do any good. You can never by all your teachings teach a sheep to

provide for winter, as an ant does, because it has no such instinct in its nature. If any thing were like to work upon a man, the most stupendous miracles were most likely to produce such an effect upon the reasons of men; yet those supernatural demonstrations without a man only cannot make him believe a truth. Miracles are a demonstration to the eye as well as preaching to the ear; though they be confessed to be above the strength of nature, yet all the spectators of them are not believers: [John xii. 37](#), 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not.' Many of those that saw our Saviour's works did not believe his doctrine; nay, they irrationally ascribed them to the devil, when they could find no reason in the nature of them to charge them upon such a score. The raising Lazarus from the dead was as high a miracle as ever was wrought yet, though many of them believed, yet others did not, but accused him to the pharisees, who thereupon more vigorously took counsel to put him to death, [John xi. 45, 46, 47, 53](#), though they acknowledged that he did many miracles. They had reason as well as others; the miracles were undeniable, as being acted before many witnesses; the natural force of them upon all reasons was equal, the considerations arising from them unanswerable. There were evil habits in the will, not removed by grace, which resisted the unanswerable reason of the miracles. What made the difference between them and those that believed? Why did not the wills of the enemies follow the undeniable reason, as well as the wills of others? Miracles may astonish men, but cannot convert them without a divine touch upon the heart. [1 Kings xviii. 39](#), the people were astonished by that wonderful miracle of fire falling from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, and licking up the water in the trench; and some reverential resolutions were produced in them: they fell upon their faces and said, 'The Lord he is God;' they showed their zeal in taking Baal's prophets, and helping, or at least suffering, Elijah to slay them; yet those people revolted to idolatry, and continued so till their captivity. The easiness of faith upon the apparition and instruction of one risen from the dead was the opinion of one of the damned: [Luke xvi. 80](#), 'If one went to them from the dead, they will repent;' but this opinion was contradicted by Abraham, ver. 31, who positively asserts, 'If they did not hear Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' If their wills were obstinate against the means God had appointed for their conversion, the same wills so corrupted would be as obstinate against the highest sort of miracles. If that, then, which is above the hand of nature to act, and bears the character of omnipotence upon the breasts of it, does not work upon men's hearts and wills of themselves, surely nature itself cannot turn the heart to God.

The two great dispensations of God are law and gospel; neither of these can of themselves work this.

(1.) The law. The law will instruct, not heal. It acquaints us with our duty, not our remedy; it irritates sin, not allays it; it exasperates our venom, but does not tame it; though it shows man his miserable condition, yet a man by it does not gain one drop of repentance.

It tells us what we should do, but corrects not the enmity of our nature whereby we may do it. The apostle takes notice of the enmity of man to the law: [Rom. v. 6, 7](#), 'Yet enemies', 'yet sinners.' That *yet* may refer to what he had spoken of the law in the chapter before. Though men had had so much time from the fall to recover themselves, and had so many advantages by the law and the ceremonies of it, yet all those years spent from the foundation of the world had produced no other effect than the weakening of them; as creatures that are wounded, by their strugglings waste their own strength. *Yet* sinners, till this time sinners, whereby the load of sin which lay upon the world was made more heavy by the continual addition made to those heaps. The offence did rather abound by the law than was diminished: [Rom. v. 20](#), 'The law was given that sin might abound.' Though it made a clear discovery of the will of God, yet it rather aggravated sin; it added no power to perform that will. The motions of sin were exasperated by it, *ex accidenti*, and brought forth fruit unto death; all the means by the law for the repressing of sin did rather inflame it. Sin could not be overcome by it, because the law was 'weak through the flesh,' that is, had not so much power as sin had; it was like a little water put upon fire, which did rather enrage than quell it: [Rom. vii. 8, 9](#), 'Sin revived' when the law came, it had a new life, and the apostle found himself utterly unable to overpower it. There were, ver. 5, 'motions of sin,' "pathemata", not only a power in sin, but an enraged power, which adds to the strength of a person, 'sin slew him: taking occasion by the commandment,' ver. 10, and a dead man is wholly at the disposing of his conquerors. The law was 'holy,' it had an impression of God's holiness upon it, [Rom. vii. 12-14](#), there was also equity and convenience in it, it was 'just and good,' and though these were considerations enough to spur men on to rid themselves of this tyrant sin, yet they could not, they had not strength enough to do it; though it was holy, just, and good, yet it was not strong enough to rescue them; and the reason of it, the apostle lays upon the difference in the nature of both: ver. 14, 'We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin;' there was an enmity in his nature to it, and therefore he must lie under the power of it till a mighty deliverer stepped in to conquer it. Do we find any better effect of the ceremonial law, which was the gospel in a mask, and which was the instrument of all the regenerations among the Jews? How few do we find renewed among them under that means which they enjoyed solely, and no other nation in the world partners with them in it! How frequent were their revolts, and rebellions, and idolatries, inconsistent with regeneration, we may read in Joshua and Judges. The inefficaciousness of means appears evidently in that nation which had greater advantages than any in the world besides; the covenants, sacrifices, oracles of God, warnings by prophets, yet so frequently overgrown with idolatry from the time of their coming out of Egypt to the Babylonish captivity; and ten tribes wholly cashiered for it.

(2.) The gospel. Though the veil of ceremonies be taken off from it, and it appears open faced, yet till the veil be taken off the understandings of men, it will produce little fruit

among them, [2 Cor. iii. 14](#). The gospel is plain, but only to him that understands, [Prov. viii. 9](#), as the sun is clear, but only to him that has an eye to see it. The gospel itself cannot remove the blindness from the mind. The proposal of the object works no alteration in the faculty, without some acting on the faculty itself. The beams of the sun shining upon a blind man make no alteration in him. The Jews, to whom the gospel was preached by our Saviour himself, could not believe, because God blinded their eyes, &c., [John xii. 39, 40](#). There must be a supernatural power, besides the proposal of the object, to take away this blindness and hardness which is the obstruction to the work of the gospel. Though the Son of God is come, and the gospel be preached, yet the understanding whereby we know is given us by him: [1 John v. 20](#), 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;' the light of the gospel shines upon all, but all have not an eye given them to see it, and a will given them to embrace it. The mere doctrine of it does not regenerate any man; some have tasted of the heavenly gift, that is, have had some understanding of Christ, who is the heavenly gift, the Son given to us, [Isa. ix. 6](#), and are partakers of some common illumination of the Holy Ghost, yet are not regenerate. Was not the gospel preached to the Jews, even by the mouth of our Saviour whom they crucified? And was it not preached to the Gentiles by the mouths of those apostles whom they persecuted? Were there not proposals that suited the natural desires of men for happiness, yet did not many that seemed to receive it, receive it not in the love of it? If God himself should appear to us in the likeness of a man, and preach to us as he did to Adam, if he did not overpower our hearts with an inward grace, he would do us no good at all by his declarations. We do not read of any work immediately upon Adam at the promulgation of the gospel by God himself, though it appears that afterwards there was, by his instructing his sons to sacrifice, and his expectations of a Messiah. But we certainly know that our Saviour, God manifested in the flesh, declared the gospel in his own person, and found no success but where he touched the heart inwardly by the grace of his Spirit. All mere outward declarations are but suasions, and mere suasion cannot change and cure a disease or habit in nature. You may exhort an Ethiopian to turn himself white, or a lame man to go; but the most pathetic exhortations cannot procure such an effect without a greater power than that of the tongue to cure nature; you may as well think to raise a dead man by blowing in his mouth with a pair of bellows. Judas had enjoyed the best means that ever were, yet went out of the world unrenewed; and the thief upon the cross, who never perhaps was in any good company in his life till he came to the cross, nor ever heard Christ speak before, was renewed by the grace of God in the last hour.

2. Neither can a man renew himself by all his moral works, before faith. Our calling is not according to our works, but 'according to God's own purpose and grace,' [2 Tim. i. 9](#). Paul, before his conversion, was 'blameless as to the righteousness of the law,' [Philip. iii. 6](#), yet this was loss; a bar rather to regeneration, than a means to further it. For all this legal

comeliness he ranks himself, before his conversion, in the number of the dead: [Eph. ii. 5](#), 'When we were dead in sins;' not *you*, but *we*, putting himself into the register of the dead. Whatsoever works a man can morally do before faith, cannot be the cause of spiritual life; they are not vital operations; if they were, they were then the effects of life, not the cause; the Scripture makes them the effects of grace: 'created to good works,' [Eph. ii. 10](#). What is an effect cannot be the cause. The best works before grace are but a refined sensuality, they arise from self-love, centre in self-satisfaction, are therefore works of a different strain from those of grace, which are referred to a higher end, and to God's well-pleasing. In all works before grace there is no resignation of the soul to God in obedience; no self-denial of what stands in opposition to God in the heart; no clear view of the evil of sin; no sound humiliation under the corruption of nature; no inward purification of the heart, but only a diligence in an external polishing. All those acts cannot produce an habit of a different kind from them. Let a man be stilted up with the highest natural excellency; let him be taller by the head and shoulders than all his neighbours in morality, those no more confer life upon him than the setting a statue upon an high pinnacle, near the beams of the sun, inspires it with a principle of motion. The increasing the perfection of one species can never mount the thing so increased to the perfection of another species. If you could vastly increase the heat of fire, you could never make it ascend to the perfection of a star. If you could increase mere moral works to the highest pitch they are capable of, they can never make you gracious, because grace is another species, and the nature of them must be changed to make them of another kind. All the moral actions in the world will never make our hearts, of themselves, of another kind than moral. Works make not the heart good, but a good heart makes the works good. It is not our walking in God's statutes materially, which procures us a new heart, but a new heart is in order before walking in God's statutes, [Ezek. xxxvi. 27](#). Our regeneration is no more wrought by works of our own than our justification. The rule of the apostle will hold good in this, as well as in the other: [Rom. xi. 6](#), 'If it be of grace, it is not of works; otherwise grace is no more grace;' and faith is 'the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast,' [Eph. ii. 9](#). And the apostle, [Titus iii. 5](#), opposes the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost' to 'works of righteousness.' He excludes works from being the cause of salvation; and would they not be the cause of salvation, if they were the cause of the necessary condition of salvation?

Prop. 3. As man cannot prepare himself to this work, nor produce it, so he cannot cooperate with God in the first production of it. We are no more co-workers with God in the first regeneration, than we were joint purchasers with Christ in redemption. The conversion of the will to God is a voluntary act; but the regeneration of the will, or the planting new habits in the will, whereby it is enabled to turn to God, is without any concurrence of the will. Therefore, say some, we are active in *primo actu*, but not in *primo actus*; or we are active in *actu exercito*, but not in *actu signato*. Some say, the habit of faith is never created separate from an act, as the trees at the creation of the world were created with ripe fruit on them;

but the tree, with the power of bearing fruit, and the fruit itself, were created at one and the same time by God. Yet though the habit be not separate at first from the act, yet there is no co-operation of the creature to the infusion of that habit, but there is to the act immediately flowing from that habit; for either that act of grace is voluntary or involuntary. If involuntary, it is not a gracious act; if voluntary, it must needs be; since the tone of the will is changed, then the creature concurs in that act; for the act of believing and repenting is the act of the creature. It is not God that repents and believes in us; but we repent and believe by virtue of that power which God has given us. In the first act, therefore, there is a concurrence of the creature; otherwise the creature could not be said to repent and believe, but something in the creature, without or against the will of the creature. But in the first power of believing and repenting, God is the sole agent. Jesus Christ is the sun that heals our natures, [Mal. iv. 2](#); the rain that moistens our hearts: [Ps. lxxii. 6](#), 'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.' What co-operation is there in the earth with the sun to the production of flowers, but by the softness it has received from the rain? It would else be parched up, and its fruits wither. The Holy Ghost does by his own power make us good trees; but we afterwards, by virtue of that power, work together with him, in bringing forth good fruit. Yet this is also a subordinate, not a co-ordinate working; rather a sub-operation than a co-operation.

1. The state wherein man is at his first renewal excludes any co-working with God. The description the apostle gives of a state of nature excludes all co-operation of the creature in the first renewal: [Titus iii. 3](#), 'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' And [Eph. ii. 2, 3](#), 'Among whom we all had our conversations in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' Every man is naturally taken up in the fulfilling the desires of the flesh; not only the Gentiles, to whom Paul writes, but himself; for he puts himself and the rest of the Jews in the number. In the second verse it was 'ye walked;' in ver. 3, it is 'we all;' and in [Titus iii. 3](#), 'we ourselves.' We who had the oracles of God, that had greater privileges than others, were carried out with as strong an *impetus* naturally, till grace stopped the tide, and after stopping, turned it against nature. When the mind was thus prepossessed, and the will made the lusts of the flesh its work and trade, there was no likelihood of any co-operation with God in fulfilling his desires, till the bent of the heart was changed from the flesh and its principles. The heart is stone before grace. No stone can co-operate with any that would turn it into flesh, since it has no seed, causes, or principles of any fleshly nature in it. Since we are overwhelmed by the rubbish of our corrupted estate, we can no more co-operate to the removal of it, than a man buried under the ruins of a fallen house can contribute to the removal of that great weight that lies upon him. Neither would a man in that state help such a work, because his lusts are pleasures; he serves his lusts, which are pleasures as well as lusts, and therefore served with delight. There is

naturally in man a greater resistance against the work of grace, than there is in the natural coldness of water against the heat of the fire, which yet penetrates into all parts of the water.

2. Regeneration is a new principle. What operation can there be before a principle of action? All co-operation supposes some principle of working; as *actus secundus* supposes *actum primum*. But a man, before his first regeneration, is blind in his mind, perverse in his will, rebellious in his affections, unable to know the truth, unable to do good, dead in sin. If he does co-operate with God before the habit be settled, then we can act before we have a power to act. We can please God in taking his part, and joining issue with him, before we have a gracious principle; which is contrary to the Scripture, which tells us we are first begotten of God before we can keep ourselves, or exert one act for the bettering ourselves: [1 John v. 18](#), 'He that is begotten of God keeps himself.' The preservation of ourselves, and every act tending thereto, follows the infusion of the first principle. And the apostle Paul implies, that God works in us to will before we work: [Philip. ii. 12, 13](#), 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God works in you both to will and to do,' &c. The apostle supposes not any operation in them before, because he supposes not their working without God's giving them a will, the act of volition. The working of the creature supposes some divine work first upon the will. Did the dust of the ground, whereof Adam's body was formed, co-work with God in figuring it into a body? or does the body contribute any more than a passive receptivity to the infusion of the rational soul? Lazarus did not concur with Christ till his powerful voice infused life and strength into him. His rising and walking was from a power conveyed, wherein Christ did work; but there was no co-working in him in the conveyance of that power. We do not say that a man co-works with the sun in enlightening a room, because he opens the shuts which barred out the light; the opening whereof is no cause of the sun's shining, but a *conditio sine qua non*. But do we so much in the first renewal? It is God alone who darts his beams, and opens our hearts too, to admit it: [Acts xvi. 14](#), it is said, 'the Lord opened Lydia's heart.' The will cannot concur in the actual infusion of a gracious principle, because it has no spark in itself by nature, suitable to that principle which is bringing it into the soul itself. The shining of God into the soul is compared to the chasing away that darkness which at the first creation was over the face of the deep: [2 Cor. iv. 6](#), 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' What co-working was there in that darkness to remove itself, but a necessity upon it to obey the command of God who had the sovereign power over his own works? If the creature did co-work with God at first, it could no more be said to be dead than a man asleep may be said to be dead; and grace were only an awakening, not an enlivening.

3. If there were any co-working of the will with God in the first infusion of grace, God would not be so much the author of grace as he is of nature in any other creature. The creature would share with him in the first principle of its action, which no creature in the

world can be said to do. It would rather be a concourse of God than a creation; but all the terms whereby God sets forth himself in the work of regeneration import more than a bare concourse or a co-operation with the creature: 'I will take away the heart of stone; I will write my law in their hearts; I will put my Spirit into them,' are loftier expressions than are used to signify a co-working only. He appropriates the whole work to himself, without interesting the creature in any active concurrence, any more than at his creation.

4. If the will of man did co-work with God in regeneration, it would then share part of the glory of God. The whole glory would not belong to God, which he challenges to himself in Scripture. He were then but an half Saviour, an half new creator. We should be in joint commission with him, by the power of our own wills, in the first motion. If creation and resurrection are acts of an almighty power, man co-operating with him in the very act of creation and resurrection would partake with God's almighty power, and in some sort be co-equal with him, and a joint partner with God in a work which required almighty power for the effecting it. Surely since the same power which raised Christ from the dead works first in every believer for his spiritual resurrection, he contributes no more to it than the body of Christ in the grave did to its resurrection, which was a work not of his humanity, but divinity. Plucking out of the power of Satan is an effect of the power of grace, and God's gift, [2 Tim. ii. 25, 20](#). God first 'gives repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.' A slave, whose hands and feet are laden with fetters, can contribute nothing to his deliverance but a will and desire to be delivered; nor that, if he be in love with his fetters, which is the case of every one of us by nature, who are as fond to be in the devil's custody as he is to have us. What co-operation can there be in this ease? Whatsoever is an act of mercy, and an act of truth in God, he is to have the sole praise of; it does not in any sort belong to the creature. The psalmist emphatically excludes man from it: [Ps. cxv. 1](#), 'Not unto us, O Lord, not to us, but unto the name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.' *Not unto us*, twice repeated, but to *thy name* give glory. Do believers beg of God the giving glory to himself, and not unto them; and will they contradict their prayers, by sharing the praise with God? This is expressed for deliverances. Much less does any praise and glory belong to the creature for the most excellent deliverance of all, from the power of sin, Satan, and death.

5. How can men co-work with God in the first regeneration, when they must needs acknowledge that in the progress of it they are oftener hinderers than furtherers of it? If God did not work more strongly in us than the best of us do in ourselves, and breathe a willingness into our wills, after regeneration, we should come short of salvation for all the first stock. How often do the best complain of their disability! Is it not frequent in the mouths of Christians in all ages as well as of Paul: [Rom. vii. 18](#), 'To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not'? How easily are our purposes shaken, and our strength staggers! Can we then co-operate with God, when we have no purpose, no strength? Let

every man's experience speak for himself, how apt he is to check the motions of the Spirit; to let our Saviour stand and knock, and not open. What strugglings of the body of death! What indispositions in an holy course! Is there not often a kind of rustiness of soul, cold damp in spiritual duties? What faint hands in any holy work! What ebbs and floods, ups and downs in his heart! What feeble knees in his walk! What hung-down heads in laying hold of Christ in repeated acts of faith! What frequent returns of spiritual lethargies! And all this after habitual grace. If our co-operations with God after grace received, are but a remove from non-acting, next neighbours to no working at all, we must conclude it to be worse with man before grace was settled in the soul, and that there was no active concurrence with it in any manner of acting; otherwise there would be as much co-operation before the implantation of habitual grace as after, which is hard to be imagined, that a man should be no stronger with grace received than under the want of it.

Prop. 4. Man by his own strength cannot actuate grace after it is received. To what purpose did the saints of old pray to quicken them, if they stood not in as much need of exciting grace from God as of renewing grace: [Ps lxxx. 18](#), 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name;' [Ps. cxix. 25, 27](#) and many places in that psalm. The new creature is little better than an infant in the best, and cannot go unless God bear it in his arms, as he speaks of Ephraim, [Hosea xi. 1, 3](#). They cannot move unless led by the Spirit. The child has a principle of motion in it, but cannot go without the assistance of the nurse; nor the soul, without the assistance of God, actuate that principle of grace. Habitual grace is the instrument, not the principal agent. A sword, though it has an edge, cuts nothing till it be moved by some strong arm. The first principle of the motion of grace resides in God. Purification in its progress is attributed to faith as an instrument, but to God as a principal agent. It is said, [Acts xv. 8, 9](#), 'God gave them the Holy Ghost, as he did to us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' Yet the will of man concurs in this actuating of faith, as a subordinate cause: [1 John iii. 3](#), a man is said to 'purify himself by hope.' A well-rigged soul, with its habit of grace spread, as well as a ship with its sails, must wait the leisure of the wind before it move. Paul acknowledges his acting for the service of God to be not from himself principally: [1 Cor. xv. 10](#), 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' It was the grace of God used me as an instrument; the glory must not stick to my fingers; it was the grace of God with me, affording strength and help to that grace which was in me. If this concurrence of God be necessary in all natural actions, it is much more in the spiritual frame of the soul to keep it up, and to keep it acting. It is not we that work to will and to do, but God works to will and to do. It is to be considered that the apostle writes to them that are in a state of grace, exhorting them to a progress in salvation depending upon God, who worlds the after will and the alter doing, as well as the first will and compliance with the grace of God. Do we not find renewed men not able, with all the grace they have, to quicken themselves sometimes in duty? What is the reason they lie spiritless before God, often with

breathings, sighs, and groans for quickening, and it is far from them? They stir themselves up, meditate, summon up all the powerful considerations they can, yet find themselves empty of a spiritual vigour. Surely there is some principal power wanting to spirit their grace, and make them leap in duty; some invisible strength has withdrawn itself, which did before conduct and breathe upon them, and fill their souls with a divine fire. They find it not in the power of the hand of their own will to actuate and quicken the grace they have, much less is it in the power of any man's hand to renew himself. The work of grace is not only a traction at the first, but a continual traction, as conservation is a continual creation: 'Draw me, and we will run after thee,' [Cant. i. 4](#). The church there speaks it as regenerate, desiring a continual traction from God, as the first ground of her race after Christ. Life she had, for she promises to run; yet this race she could not begin nor continue, without traction from God.

Prop. 5. Man cannot by the power of his own will preserve grace in himself. Our Saviour's prayer to his Father, [John xvii. 11, 15](#), to 'keep them,' imports, that they were too weak to keep themselves: 'Unless the Lord keep the city, in vain does the watchman wake,' [Ps. cxxvii. 1](#). Unless God preserve the soul, all the watchfulness of habitual grace will be to little purpose. All creatures, if God hide his face, are troubled, [Ps. civ. 29](#), much more the new creature, whose strength does more necessarily depend upon God, because of its powerful opposites. Were it not for the assisting grace of God, the unruly lusts in our hearts would soon bear down habitual grace in the best. How many temptations are prevented which we cannot foresee! How many corruptions are restrained, which the best grace cannot fully conquer! How is the tide and torrent of these waters beaten back, which otherwise would go over our heads! The poor will of Adam preserved him not against a temptation, when he had no indwelling corruption to betray him; nor did the will of the angels, who had no temptation, keep them from forsaking their habitation. How can any renewed man, alive with all his grace, merely by the strength of his own will, keep himself from sinking down in the lake of his old corruption? He that would ask the fallen angels in the midst of their torments, what was the reason of their fall, would receive no other answer but that their strength was unsuccessful, because it depended upon their own will. The knowledge of the gospel and evangelical impressions are never like to keep up without the Holy Ghost: [2 Tim. i. 14](#), 'That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghost,' not by thine own strength. It we cannot keep a form of sound words, which, as it is knowledge, is more agreeable to the natural appetite of man, without the Holy Ghost, much less can we preserve grace in us, which is more stomached by corrupt nature. Neither are good frames like to be preserved in us without God's keeping: [1 Chron. xxix. 18](#), 'keep this in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.' Our hearts will not let any good motion sink into them, unless God give a *pondus* to his own motion. If, then, regenerate men are unable of

themselves to actuate and preserve grace received, much more inability is there in a natural man to gain that which he has not a

spark of in his own nature, but an enmity to.

Quest. But, do you divest man of all power, all freedom of will? Is he able to do nothing in order to regeneration?

Ans. We do not divest man of all power; therefore, before we consider what power belongs to man, we may consider,

(1.) Man simply in his fall. So man lost all his natural ability by his first sin, and was the meritorious cause of his losing supernatural grace, which God by a judicial act removed from him, and in this state man had no ability unto anything morally good. Nothing was due to Adam but the state of the devils, who have no affection to anything morally good, but always do that which is in its own nature evil, and always sin with evil intentions. Adam would have been thus, had the threatening, according to the tenor of it, been executed; there had been no common affections, no more light in his understanding than what might have served for his torment, as wicked men, after death, are deprived in a judicial way of that light in their minds, those velleities and good motions which sometime hovered in them, those affections which were here exercised now and then towards God. The sentence given against Adam is then pronounced against them, and they laid under the final execution of it, which was to die the death: [Gen. ii. 17](#), 'Thou shalt surely die,' a death of all morality, all affections to anything that has the resemblance of goodness. It might be a prediction of what would be in course, as well as what would be inflicted in way of judicial recompense. None of these things can be looked for in Adam, or any of his posterity, as fallen; not a grain of life, or anything tending that way, was due to him, but only death.

(2.) Man is to be considered as respited from the present suffering this sentence by the intervention of Christ; whereby he is put into another way of probation. So those common notions in our understandings, and common motions in our wills and affections, so far as they have anything of moral goodness, are a new gift to our natures by virtue of the mediation of Christ. In which sense he may be said to 'taste death for every man,' [Heb. ii. 9](#), and be 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' By virtue of which promised death, some sparks of moral goodness are preserved in man. Thus his 'life was the light of men;' and he is 'The light that lightens every man that comes into the world,' which sets the candle of the Lord in the spirit of man a-burning and sparkling, [John i. 9](#), and upholds all things by his mediatory as well as divine power, [Heb. i. 3](#), which else would have sunk into the abyss. By virtue of this mediation, some power is given back to man, as a new donation, yet not so much as that he is able by it to regenerate himself; and whatsoever power man has, is originally from this cause, and grows not up from the stock of nature, but from common grace.

Which common grace is either,

[1.] More general, to all men. Whereby those divine sparks in their understandings, and whatsoever is morally praiseworthy in them, is kept up by the grace of God, which was the cause that Christ tasted death for every man: [Heb. ii. 9](#), 'That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man;' whereby the apostle seems to intimate, that by this grace, and this death of Christ, any remainders of that honour and glory wherewith God crowned man at first are kept upon his head; as will appear, if you consider the eighth Psalm, whence the apostle cites the words which are the ground of his discourse of the death of Christ.

[2.] More particular common grace, to men under the preaching of the gospel. Which grace men 'turn into wantonness' or lasciviousness, [Jude 4](#). Grace they had, or the gospel of grace, but the wantonness of their nature prevailed against the intimations of grace to them. Besides this common grace, there is a more special grace to the regenerate, the more peculiar fruit of Christ's mediation and death for them. All this, and whatsoever else you can conceive that has but a face of comeliness in man, is not the birth of fallen nature abstracted from this mediation. Therefore when the Gentiles are said to 'do by nature the things contained in the law,' it is not to be understood of nature merely as fallen, for that could do no such thing; but of nature in this new state of probation, by the interposition of Christ the mediator, whose powerful word upheld all things, and kept up those broken fragments of the two tables of law, though dark and obscure. And considering God's design of setting forth the gospel to the world, there was a necessity of those relics, both in the understanding, and affections, and desire for happiness, to render men capable of receiving the gospel, and those inexcusable that would reject it. So that by this mediation of Christ, the state of mankind is different since the fall from that of the evil angels or devils. For man has, just, a power of doing that which is in its own nature good; secondly, a power of doing good with a good intention; not indeed supremely for the glory of God, but for the good of his country, the good of his neighbours, the good of the world, which was necessary for the soldering together human societies, so that sometimes even in sins man has good intentions. Whereas the devil does always that which in its own nature is evil, and always sins with evil intentions. Without this mediation, every man had been as very a slave to sin as the devil; though he be naturally a slave to sin, yet not in that full measure the devil is, unless left in a judicial manner by God upon high provocations.

There is then a liberty of will in man; and some power there is left in man. And here I shall show,

1. What kind of liberty this is.
2. That there is some liberty in man.
3. How far the power of man by common grace does extend.

Quest. First, what kind of liberty this is.

Ans. 1. The essential liberty of the will remains. Liberty is of the essence of the will, and cannot be taken away without extinction of the nature of man; it is free from compulsion,

otherwise it were a *not-will*, which liberty does not consist in a choice of good or evil. For even under this depravation it cannot choose evil *qua malum*, as such. It can choose nothing but what appears to it under the notion of good; though it many times embraces that which is materially evil, yet the formal consideration upon which it embraces it is as good, either in reality or in appearance; as the sight in every colour sees light. And when it is carried out to that which is really evil, and only apparently good, it is by force of those habits in the understanding, which make it give a false judgment; or, by the power of the sensitive appetite, which hurries it on to the object proposed, but always it respects in its motion everything as good, either an honest, pleasant, or profitable good.

Ans. 2. Though the essential liberty of the will remains, yet the rectitude whereby it might have been free only to that which was really good is lost. Man by creation had a freedom of will to choose that which was really good, yet had a mutability, and could choose evil; and by choosing evil rather than good, sank his posterity into this depraved liberty which now remains. Though since the fall man is preserved in his natural freedom, and cannot be forced, yet he has not a power to will well, because that righteous principle whereby he did will well is departed from him; yet because the essential freedom due to his nature remains, whatsoever he wills he wills freely, so that though something the will wills may be materially good, yet it wills that good in an ill manner, for being overcome naturally by sin man can do nothing but according to that law which sin, as a master that has conquered him, imposes upon him: [2 Peter ii. 19](#), 'They themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' And of all men in a state of nature, though under common grace, the apostle pronounces, [Rom. iii. 11](#), that 'there is none that seeks after God;' that is, in any thing they do, though never so good, they seek not God but themselves. 'There is no fear of God,' no respect to God 'before their eyes,' ver. 18, whence it comes to pass, that by reason of this dominion of sin nothing can be done well. Hence man is said to be dead; not that the life which does constitute the nature of the soul is taken away, but that which renders it fit for performing actions pleasing to God; for such a life does consist, not in the nature of the soul or will, but in that habitual integrity which was in man by creation. As the body when it is dead does not cease to be a body, but ceases to be animated, by the separation of the soul from it, so the soul may be truly said to be dead, though the power of the soul be not taken away. If the spiritual rectitude in that power which did constitute it spiritually living be departed, by the removal of this righteousness, the will is not free to spiritual things, though it be to natural. It is 'free among the dead,' as the psalmist speaks of himself; [Ps. lxxxviii. 5](#); free to dead works, not to living; to this or that dead work, to any work within the verge of sinning, as a bird in a large cage may skip this way and that way by its natural spontaneous motion, but still within the cage.

Ans. 3. Therefore, though man has lost this liberty to good, he retains a freedom to the commission of sin, under the necessity of sinning. This freedom is a power of choice and

election of a thing, which differs from that spontaneity which is in beasts, who act by instinct, without any reasoning in the case, because they want a reasoning power. Though man be under a necessity of sinning, yet it is not a necessity of constraint, but a necessity of immutability, which is consistent with liberty, though the other be not. A creature may be unchangeably carried to good or evil, and yet be free in both: to good, as the angels and glorified saints cannot will to sin, because their wills are immutably determined to good. They cannot but praise and love God, yet they freely do both, and our Saviour did freely do that good which he could not but do by reason of his hypostatical union, otherwise he could not have merited, for all merit requires the concurrence of the will. To evil; the devils cannot will to do good, because their wills are unchangeably determined to evil, yet they sin as freely as if there were no immutable necessity upon them. So man cannot but naturally sin in all that he does yet he is not constrained to sin, but sins as freely and voluntarily as if there were no necessity upon his nature to corruption,—as freely as if God had not foreseen that he would do so. Man sins with as great a pleasure as if he were wholly independent upon the providence of God, and the more a man is delighted with sin, the greater freedom there is in it. Hence the Scripture lays sin upon the choice of man: [Isa. lxvi. 3, 4](#), 'They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations.' They have their own ways, that is, ways proper to corrupt man; but they chose them and delighted in them. Man is voluntary under his depravation, free in his aversion from God, a free necessity, a delightful immutability. The will cannot be compelled to will that which it would not, or not to will that which it would. Then sin arises from a settled habit, the freer is a man in his sin; and though he cannot act otherwise than according to that habit, yet his actions are most voluntary, because he is the cause of that habit which he acquired by evil acts, and by succeeding acts testifies his approbation of it.

2. That there is some liberty in man, some power in man. Not indeed such a power as the Jews thought man had naturally, of exercising himself about anything that God should reveal, without the infusion of a new power, to enable him to act that which God required by supernatural revelation. Some power and liberty must be allowed,

(1.) To clear the justice of God. No just man will punish another for not doing that which was simply and physically impossible; and 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' It is a good speech of Austin, If there were not the grace of God, how could the world be saved? If there were not free will, how could the world be judged? If man were divested of all kind of liberty, he might have some excuse for himself; but since the Scripture pronounces men without excuse, [Rom. i. 20](#), some power must be granted to clear the equity of God's justice. No man sins in that which he is under an inevitable constraint to do, and so would be unjustly punished. It does not appear that God does condemn any man simply for not being regenerate, but for not using the means appointed to such an end, for not avoiding those sins which hindered his regeneration, and which might have been avoided

by him if he would, though indeed every unregenerate man will be condemned. The pouring out the wrath of God upon man is principally for those sins which they might have refrained, and had sufficient reason against: [Eph. v. 6](#), for 'because of these things,' that is, for those gross sins which they might have avoided, mentioned ver. 5, 'comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,' "apeithias"; men that would not be persuaded, which obstinacy was in their will. As these are the causes of God's wrath, so these will be alleged as the principal reasons of the last sentence. And our Saviour in his last judgment does not charge men with their unregeneracy, but with their omissions of what they might have done, and that easily; and commissions which they might have avoided, [Mat. xxv. 41-43](#), with their not feeding his members when they were hungry, &c., which were things as much in their power as anything in the world. And the reason Christ renders of the sentence passed upon men, to depart from him, was their working of iniquity: [Mat. vii. 23](#), 'Depart from me, you that work iniquity,' that work it voluntarily, and work that you might have forborne. Though unregeneracy does exclude a man from heaven, as a condition without which a man cannot come there, yet nothing of this is mentioned in the last sentence. If man had a firm will to turn to God, and had not then a power conferred upon him to turn, I know not what to say; but man has no will to turn, yea, he has no will to do those things which he might do. Supposing man has a power to avoid such and such sins, he is justly punished for not making use of that power. Nay, supposing he had no power to avoid them, yet if his will be set to that sin he is justly condemned, not for want of power, but for the delight his will took in it. From which delight in it, it may be gathered that if he had had a power to have shunned it, he would not have shunned it. If a man be assaulted by murderers that will cut his throat, if he will not use his power against them, but take a pleasure in having his throat cut, is not this man a self-murderer, both in the judgment of God and man? Let me use another illustration, since the end of all our preaching should be to humble man and clear God. If a man be cast out of an high tower, and be pleased with his fall, would he not be justly worthy of it, and to be neglected by men, not because he did not help himself in his fall, for that was not in his own power, but because he was mightily pleased and contented with his fall, and with such a pleasure, that if he had been able to have helped himself he would not? So though man be fallen in Adam, yet when he comes to discern between good and evil, he commits the evil with pleasure. So that supposing he had no power to avoid sins, yet he is worthy of punishment because he does it delightfully. Whence it may be concluded, if he had had power to avoid it, he would not, because his will is so malignant.

(2.) Without some liberty in the will, free from necessity of compulsion, man would not be capable of sin, nor of moral goodness. No human law does impute that for a vice, or a virtue, to which a man is carried by constraint, without any power to avoid. Where anything is done without a will, it is not an human action. Beasts therefore are not capable of sin, because they want reason and will. If man had not liberty of will, he would be as a beast,

which has only a spontaneous power of motion without reason. Sin could not be charged upon man, as God does all along: [Ps. xcvi. 10](#), 'It is a people that do err in their hearts;' and [Ps. cxix. 21](#), 'Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.' It had been no error in them, if they had not done it voluntarily. The erring from God's commandments arises from pride of heart, they had not else deserved a rebuke. Who would chide a clock for going wrong, which has no voluntary motion? Man without a liberty of will could not be the author of his own actions, and sin could no more be imputed to him, than the irregular motion of a watch can be imputed to the watch itself, but rather to the workman or governor of it. Without a voluntary power, man would be as all engine, moved only with springs, and human laws, which punish any crime, would be as ridiculous as Xerxes' whipping the sea, because it would not stop its tide. Neither were any praise due to man for any moral virtue, no more than praise is due to a lifeless picture for being so beautiful, or to the limner's pencil for making it so: the praise is due to the artist, not to the instrument.

(3.) Without some liberty and power of motion in the will, all the reason of man, and those notions in the understanding, left by the virtue of Christ's mediatory interposition, would be to no purpose. The reason why men do err is because they do not take right ways of judging according to those means they have: 'Ye err,' says our Saviour, 'not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God,' [Mat. xxii. 29](#). They have a faculty of judgment, and means whereby to judge, which would prevent errors. There is therefore some suitable power in man to follow the judgment of reason, if he will. He would be in vain endowed with that power of reasoning, if there were not a power of motion in some measure suitable to that reason. The authority of judging in the understanding would be wholly insignificant; all debates about any object proposed would be to no end, if the will had not a liberty to follow that judgment. How can God make appeals to men as he does, if they had not a power of judging that they ought to have done otherwise, and might have done otherwise than they did? Though man has not a sufficient light left in his nature for salvation, yet he has such a light of reason in him to which he might be more faithful in his motions than he is, otherwise the apostle could not have argued from that light the heathens had to their conviction, as he does, [Rom. i. 19-21](#), &c., and manifests their unfaithfulness to that truth which God had manifested to them, and manifested in them in their nature. Most sins do arise from the neglect of being guided by that light which is in men.

(4.) The glory of God's wisdom in the government of the world would not have been so conspicuous, if some liberty had not been allowed to the will. It is no great matter to keep in order an inanimate thing, as a clock that must obey a necessity; God would have been but like a good clock-keeper only, as ones says. But how much does it make for the wisdom of God, to make the free motions of his creature, the various humours in the will of man, centre at last in his own glory, contrary to the will and design of the creature, that they have

their natural motions, their voluntary motions, and God superintends over them, and moves them according to his own will regularly, according to their nature, without crossing them? 'The determinate counsel of God,' in the death of our Saviour, and the free will of Pilate and the Jews, meet in the same point: God acting wisely, graciously, justly; their wills acting freely and naturally, reduced, without injury to their nature, to the due point of God's will.

Quest. 3. The third question, How far does the power of man by common grace extend?

Ans. As in a body deprived of the soul there is some power of growth left in the hair and nails, so some power is left in the soul, though it be spiritually dead. As a regenerate man by special grace has a power of doing that which is spiritually good, so a natural man by common grace has a power of doing things morally good, if he will. God keeps the key of regenerating grace in his own hands, and unlocks what hearts he pleases, and brings in a vital spirit into whom he pleases; but there is by common grace an ability in men to do more than they do, but that they harbour, cherish, and increase those vicious inclinations in their own souls. But let it be remembered that this power is not to be abstracted from God's common grace, as the power of a renewed man after grace is not to be abstracted from special grace, nor the natural powers of motion to the actual motion, not to be abstracted from God's general providential concurrence.

(1.) Man has a power by common grace to avoid many sins: I say, a power by common grace; for sometime, upon the neglecting the conduct of natural light, God pulls up the sluice of his restraining grace, lets out the torrent of their natural corruption upon them, which forcibly hurries them to all kind of wickedness; as it is said, [Rom. vii. 24, 26](#), 'Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; for this cause God gave them up to vile affections.' Therefore, and for this cause, that is, for going contrary to that natural light they had, God let the lusts of their own hearts, which he had restrained, have their full swing against them. In this case sin can no more be avoided, than a man can stop a torrent.

Again; though a man, as he is in a state of nature, cannot but do evil, yet he is not necessitated to this or that kind of sin, but he may avoid this or that *pro hic* and *nunc* in particular, though he cannot in general; as a man who has the liberty of walking where he pleases in a prison, he may choose whether he will come into this or that walk within the liberty of the prison; but let him move which way he will, he is a prisoner still.

Quest. If it be said, if a man has power to avoid this or that sin, why may he not avoid all?

Ans. I answer, If he had power to avoid all, he would be restored to the state of Adam. But the reason is this, the power to avoid this or that particular sin arises from a particular cause, the natural subjection of appetite to reason, the lightness of temptation; or if the temptation be more vehement, the stirring up reason and pressing considerations against it; but the power to shun all sin depends upon the subordination of the faculties one to an-

other, in the due order of their creation, and an universal subjection of them to God. Though a man, by a careful watch, may withstand a particular temptation, yet as long as he is alienated from God, and has corrupt habits in him, which are prone to sinful acts, he will one time or other, by some sudden temptation, be carried out according to his natural inclination, before he is able to premeditate, and set reason on work. And sometimes the motions to sin come in such troops, that he cannot stir up his force against all, so that while he is combating against one, another comes behind and surprises him. As another Romanist illustrates it, a vessel has three holes to leak at; a man with two hands may stop two of them, which he will, but the third will remain open of necessity. None will say that the devil can avoid all sin in general, and become holy for the future, because his will is determined to sin, but this or that individual act of sin he may; for he may choose whether he will assault this man or that with such a temptation, or whether at this time or another. As if two commands were given to the good angels, and it be left to their wills whether they will do that or the other, though they cannot but do good, because their wills are so determined, yet they have a liberty to choose which command they will at present follow. And the reason of this is this: there is no physical necessity upon a man to this or that sin, as there is that the fire should burn. Lusts only offer themselves; they have no force upon a man, but be his own will; they have no authority from God to compel him; then God should be the author of sin. Satan can give no commission to them to break open our hearts; and though he be a strong adversary, he cannot break them open. If the door be open, it is our own act. Is there any necessity upon a man to run into this or that infectious company, or drink brimful cups, till he has drowned both his reason and sentiments of morality? Has he not power to quell many incentives to sin? Show me that man in the world that, upon serious consideration, would say, it is utterly impossible for him to avoid this or that particular sin when he is tempted to it. What men do in this case, they do willing, though a strong temptation may be the first motive of it. It is said, [Hos. v. 11](#), 'Ephraim willingly walked after the commandment,' though the first motive to it was the command of their prince Jeroboam.

To evidence this, let me do it by some queries, which may both satisfy that we divest not man of all power, and prevent the ill use men may make of this doctrine, to encourage sluggishness.

1. Cannot you avoid this or that foreseen occasion of sin? Cannot he that knows how prone he is to overthrow his reason when the wine sparkles in the glass, avoid coming within the sight of it? What force is there upon his legs to go, or his hands to take the cup? Can we not starve those affections we have to this or that particular sin, by neglecting the means to feed them? If a man stood by with a drawn sword to stab you if you went into such a place, could you not forbear going in? What is the reason? Fear. And why might not a natural fear of God, heightened by consideration, be of as much force with you as the fear of man, unless atheism has swallowed up all sentiments of a Deity? Do you not rather wish

for opportunities, and court a temptation? put you heads out of the window, with Sisera's mother; why is the chariot of the devil so long a coming? It is said, [Prov. xxi. 10](#), 'The soul of the wicked desires evil.'

2. Have you not a power to avoid gross sins? Is there any force upon men, to open, sensual sins? Have they not a power to abstain from fleshly lusts? Has not the will a commanding power over the members? What hinders it from exercising that power? The members are not forced, but they are 'yielded up' by consent of the will to sin, [Rom. vi. 19](#). Had not Achan as much natural power to forbear taking the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, as the rest of that vast number of the Israelites? Not one of their hands touched any of the spoil. Had he not as much power as any of them to have restrained his hands, though he could not quench his covetousness? The law of nature tells us, we ought not to do that to another which we would not have done to ourselves. Have we not as much power to observe this as the Gentiles, who did by nature the things contained in the law? Why may not a man's will command his tongue to speak that which is true, as well as that which is false? Is there not power to control it from speaking blasphemy, and belching out cursed oaths? Cannot you command the hand to forbear striking another wrongfully? Has not a murderer power to keep his sword in his scabbard, as well as to sheath it in his neighbour's bowels? Can any man say, that there was one gross sin in the whole course of his life, but he had a power to avoid it if he would? Forbearance of gross sin consists in a naked omission and a not acting, which is far more easy than a positive acting, and every man has a power to suspend his own act.

3. Did you never resist a temptation to a particular sin? Why may you not then resist it afterward if you will, since the same common grace attends you? If the will be disengaged one moment from a sin under a great temptation, why not another moment from sin, under a less temptation? No temptation can overpower your strength, unless the will freely shake hands with it: [Acts v. 3](#), 'Why has Satan filled thy heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost?' His meaning is not, why Satan has done it, for Ananias could not render a reason of that; but why did thou suffer Satan to fill thy heart? If you have given a cheek to Satan before, is it not as easy to say again, 'Get thee behind me, Satan'?

4. Have you not power to shun many inward sins? Man, where he has least power, yet he has some, viz. over his thoughts. We cannot, indeed, hinder the first risings and motions of them, which will steam up from the corrupt fumes and lake whether he will or no; but cannot we hinder the progress of them? Is there not a power to check the delight in them if we will, or divert our thoughts another way, not listen to their suggestions, and hold no inward converse with them? Though you cannot hinder their intrusion, may you not hinder their lodging? 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?' [Jer. iv. 14](#). Sure we have a power by common grace to forbear any conference with the motions of flesh and blood.

5. When you do sin, had you not many assistances against it, which if you had hearkened to, you might have avoided it? Were there not previous dissuasions from that inward monitor, conscience? When sin has been enticing you on one hand, and conscience warning you on the other, have you not more willingly listened unto the pleasant reasoning of sin, than the wholesome admonitions of conscience? Can you not as well listen to what conscience as to what sin does propose? But have you not wilfully scorned its judgment? Have you not raged against it with a confidence in sin (which is the case of the foolish sinner, [Prov. xiv. 16](#), 'The fool rages, and is confident'), and would 'not consider any of the ways of God' it minded you of, [Job xxxiv. 27](#), and gave no more regard to its sober dictates, or its louder pressings, than you have to the barking of little curs in the street? Why could you not, with those assistances, have avoided that particular act of sin? The fault was clearly in your wills. Can you not rather choose a cup of wine, than a cup of poison? clear streams, than muddy waters? Besides those assistances, you might have had more, if under the batteries of temptation you had sought to heaven for them. Might you not, then, have avoided this or that sin, when you had such assistances, and might have had more?

6. Have you not avoided sin upon less accounts and considerations? The heathen philosopher could observe, that men may live better than they do. The wrestlers and champions in the Olympic games lived most temperately and continently during that time, to be more fit for the gaining the prize. May not rational considerations do as much, if excited in your minds, as an ambitious desire of honour and affection to victory did in them? Had not Saul a power to withdraw his hand from the unrighteous persecution of David before, as well as when he was sensible of David's kindness in sparing his life when he might have killed him? A drunkard under the disease and pain caused by his sin, can forbear his cups; does his disease confer any power upon him more than he had before? No; why could he not then have forborne his drunken revellings? Can men be restrained from some sins by the eye of a man, the presence of a child? What power do their eyes confer upon them? They only excite that which they had before. Cannot men forbear a sinful act for a sum of money if it were proffered them or in the presence of a king, who is said to 'scatter away evil with his eyes,' [Prov. xx. 8](#), or in a visible and imminent danger? If a gibbet or a stake were set before men, that they should be immediately executed if they did not forbear such a sinful action, or if they did not go to hear a sermon; can any be so foolish, to think that the glister of gold, the penalty of the law, the sight of a gibbet, should confer a power upon you which you were not before possessed with? It is not then the want of power to avoid sin, but the want of will.

7. Why does conscience check any man after the commission of sin, if it were not in his power to avoid it? All those actions which fall under the cognisance and check of conscience, are actions in our own power, and within the verge of our wills. For the pain of conscience is of another kind than that pain or grief which is raised by those accidents we could not avoid. It arises from the liberty of the will, and galls the soul when it considers, that that

which it has done was in its power to be done otherwise. This is the common language of men upon the regrets of conscience: I might have done otherwise, I was warned by my friends; I slighted their warnings, I had resolutions to the contrary, but I stifled them. All men have laid the fault upon themselves, and what is universal consent has a truth in it; the consciences of all men would not gall them for that which they had no power to decline. Indeed, if men were necessitated to sin, they could not be tormented in hell, for the torment there is conscience acting rationally, and reflecting upon them for their wilfulness in the world. If man had not a power to refuse sin, conscience would have no ground for any such reflections to rack and torment them. And it is observable, that natural men, somewhat awakened upon a deathbed, are not so racked by their consciences simply for not being regenerate, as for not avoiding those sins which were hindrances, and not using those means which were appointments of God for such an end, because those were in their power; but they wilfully embraced the one, and as wilfully refused the other.

Prop. 2. Man has a power, by common grace, to do many more good actions (actions materially good) than he does. Evangelical works we cannot do without union to Christ, so himself says, 'Without me you can do nothing,' [John xv. 5](#); nothing according to the order of the gospel, nothing spiritually, nothing acceptably, because no such fruits can arise, where faith, the root of such works, is wanting. Though man be much crippled in regard of morals, yet he is not wholly dead to them, as he is to spirituals. A man may 'break off his sins by (moral) righteousness, and his iniquity by showing mercy to the poor;' by taking off the yoke of oppression, and restoring of what he has rifled, which counsel Daniel gives to Nebuchadnezzar, chap. iv. 27. Though a sick man cannot do all the acts of a sound man till he be perfectly cured, yet he has some power of acting some things like a sound man, remaining with his disease. The young man in the Gospel (yet out of Christ) morally kept the law; so may men under the gospel keep the outward and material part of the precept. There are not only some common notions left since the fall, but also some seeds of moral righteousness in the nature of man. The Gentiles did not only, by nature, in part restored, know the things written in the law, but they did by nature do them, Rom. id. 14; upon this stock they bore many excellent fruits. What patience, chastity, contempt of the pleasures of the world! What affections to their country, and bowels of compassion to men in misery! And what devotion in the external worship of their gods, according to their light, were exemplary in them, though only under the conduct of nature! And these works, though they were not according to the exactness of the law, and failed also in the manner of them, and could not please God for want of faith, yet so far as they were agreeable to the law of nature, and in regard of the materiality of them, were not offensive to God. This moral righteousness of theirs was only external, and rather an image of righteousness than a true one. Abimelech had a natural integrity, which God acknowledges to be in him, and did arise from his moral nature, though he also appropriates to himself the restraint of Abimelech, and his concurrence with an

approbation of that moral integrity: [Gen. xx. 6](#), 'I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart: for I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her;' "lo netaticha", I gave thee not up to touch her. If men did nourish a moral integrity, which they might do, God would concur with them to preserve them from many crimes. If those which were only under the guidance of natural light had so much power to do many moral acts by a common grace, is man's power less under the gospel, whereby they have an addition of a greater light to this natural? If man was able to do so much by the light of nature, there can be no inability brought upon him under the light of the gospel, unless men, by their sluggishness and obstinacy, provoke God judicially to deprive them of that power, and withdraw his hand from them, and so give them up to all kind of wickedness, as it is the dreadful case of many in these days. Man may keep the law of nature better than he does, and for not keeping that he is condemned.

Prop. 3. Men have a power to attend upon the outward means God has appointed for regeneration. Though man cannot renew himself, yet he has a natural power to attend upon the means God has afforded. Though a man has not power to cure his own disease or heal his wound, yet he has power to advise with others, and use the best medicines for his recovery. There is not an outward duty a renewed man does, but a natural man has power externally to do it; though what is essentially good in all parts, cannot be done without special grace, yet what is externally good may be done by the assistance of common grace. Have you not passions, fear, love, desire, grief? Why cannot you exercise them about other objects than ordinarily they are employed about? Why can you not make hell the object of your fears, and heaven the object of your desire? Why might not Esau have wept for his sins, as well as for the loss of the blessing? Might he not have changed the object if he would? Why may we not exercise our inward affections more in our attendance on God? Is not a little excuse sufficient to put off from duty, a great excuse not sufficient to keep you from committing sin? Great business must be laid aside for sin, not the least laid aside for God. Every little thing is a lion in the way then. Do you not many times rack your minds to invent pleas for neglect of duty? Why can you not set them on work to consider reasons to move you to service? Have we not power to be more serious in the use of means than we are? We can be so when some affliction presses us, or conscience gnaws us. Neither of these furnishes us with a new power. Conscience is like the law, acquaints us with our duty, but gives us no strength. The charge God brines against Ephraim was, that he 'would not frame his doings to turn towards God,' [Hosea v. 4](#); he would entertain no thoughts, not one action that had the least prospect towards repentance, he would use no means for that end, or have a look that way. If a man will not do what is in his power, it is a sign he will not be renewed. Can he pretend to a desire to live, who will not eat, and endeavour to prevent foreseen dangers? Or can he pretend to a desire to build, that will not use materials when he may?

There are two great means: hearing the word, and prayer.

(1.) Hearing the word. Have not men power to go to hear the word, to hear a sermon, as well as to see a play? Have they any shackles upon their feet, that they cannot carry them to a place of worship as well as to a place of vanity and sin? Can you not as well read the Scripture as a romance? Has not the will a despotic power over the members of the body? How came Herod to have more natural power to hear the word, and to hear it 'with pleasure,' [Mark vi. 20](#), than other men have? May you not strive against diversions, resist carnal affection, rouse up your souls from their laziness, and endeavour to close with the word? How smilingly would God look upon such endeavours? If men do not, it is out of a natural sluggishness and enmity of will, not for want of power if they would. Men do not what they might. Certainly he does no more desire regeneration who neglects and despises the great instrument of it, than he can be said to desire his own preservation, who neglects medicines proper for the cure of his disease.

(2.) Prayer. I do not mean a spiritual prayer, which is by the special assistance and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but of a natural prayer by common instinct; such a one as the apostle puts Simon Magus upon, who he knew was destitute of any air of the Spirit to breathe out, as being 'in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity,' [Acts viii. 22, 23](#), yet supposes him to have a power in some manner to express his desires to God; or such a power that was common in heathens, upon any distress to run to their altars, and fill their temples with cries to their gods. You cannot pray in the Holy Ghost, but you may send up natural and rational cries to God. Did not Jonah's mariners cry every man to his god? Have you not as much power to cry to the true God as the heathens to false ones? There is the natural prayer of those mariners, as well as the natural integrity of Abimelech, which was not a new-covenant integrity. Can you not be as devout as the publican, and cry, with more seriousness of affection than generally men do, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner'? When men are upon a death-bed, ready to take their leave of the world, they can then cry. It is not their death-bed inspires them with power, more than they had before, but they have more mind, and see a greater necessity of crying to God. They have more power in the time of their health, by how much the habit of sin wanted that strength which has been acquired by a continuance of acts till the time of their sickness; for the fewer sins have been committed, the less is the power impaired. Though God has kept other things in his hand, yet he has given us a power of begging, we will use it as a means to obtain them. Can you not kneel down before God, and implore his assistance? Can you not acknowledge before him that it is impossible for you to change yourself, but that your eyes are upon his grace; that you cannot attain by your own strength a spiritual heart; that you will seek nowhere else for it but from his hand; and that you will not be at rest till he has put in his hand and dropped upon your hearts? Can you not thus cry out, Oh that I were a renewed person! as well as cry out, Oh that I were rich and honourable in the world! Had Paul a new tongue when he cried out, 'Who shall deliver me from

the body of this death?' Was it not the same member wherein he had breathed out threatenings against the disciples?

Prop. 4. Man has a power to exercise consideration. He has seminals of *jus* and *aequum*, and a power of judging according to them: [Luke xii. 57](#) 'Yea, why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?' Our Saviour checks them for not making use of their natural power; in the searching their own consciences, and judging their own acts, as well as they did in discerning the face of the sky, and what weather would follow. There is a power of consideration in a rebellious heart; for God acknowledges it in a rebellious nation: [Ezek. xii. 3](#), 'It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.'

1. Can you not reflect upon yourselves? Every man has a reflexive faculty; otherwise he is not a man. Reflection is the peculiar privilege of a rational creature, without which he is not rational. The Pharisees could reflect upon themselves, and say, 'Are we blind also?' [John ix. 40](#). Can you not then take a survey of your past lives; cast up the accounts of your souls, as well as your books? Can you not view your particular crimes, with the aggravations attending them? Yea, you can, if you would. Can you not look back upon the means you have neglected, the love you have slighted, and the light you have shut your eyes against? As long as a man has reason, he may use his reason in these things as well as in others. Why may he not reflect upon himself in spiritual concerns, as well as civil affairs in the world? Cannot he, by comparing the face of his soul with the glass of the word, understand his own state, and by self-reflection come to an understanding of his own lost condition and weakness?

2. Can you not consider the word? Cannot your reasons be employed about the objects the word offers, as well as the objects the world offers? Though you cannot act spiritually in the duties of religion, can you not act rationally in them, as men? Are you endued with a rational soul, to consider the proposals of worldly affairs and concerns, and can you not exercise the same power in considering the proposal made to you by the gospel? The gospel is not only spiritual, but rational. As long as you have a thinking faculty, can you not consider what the reasonable meaning of it is? Though you have not a spiritual taste, you have a rational understanding; why may it not be busied about one object as well as another? The natural repentance of the Ninevites at Jonah's preaching, implied the consideration of his threatening sermon. Why is there not a power in you to think of what is proposed to you out of the word, as well as you can think of what you read of a mathematical or philosophical book, or some history? The power is the same in both, the faculty the same. As the object proposed adds no power to the faculty, so it takes away no power the faculty already has. Surely man is not such a block or stone, but he may turn these things over and over, press them upon his own soul, which may make way for the sensibleness of his state, and putting the will out of its sinful indifference. What any natural man has done, that may all under the same means do, if they will. Why may not the veriest wretch among us humble himself at the hearing of the word, as well as wicked Ahab? [1 Kings xxi. 27, 29](#), 'When Ahab heard

these words, he rent his clothes. Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself?' He discovered an external humiliation, after the consideration of the threatening denounced by the prophet.

3. Can you not cherish, by consideration, those motions which are put into you? There is not a man but the Spirit strives with, one time or other, [Gen vi. 3](#). Has not man a power to approve any good counsel given him, if he will? Have you not had some supernatural motions lifting you up towards God, and pressing obligations upon you, to walk more circumspectly? Why might you not have cherished them, as well as smothered them? Why could you not have considered the tendency of them, as well as have considered how to divert and drown them, by engaging in some sensual dust? Was the power of consideration lost? No; you could not then have cast about in your minds, by what means you should be rid of them, or how you should resist them. Have you not wilfully rejected them, even when consideration has been revived at a sermon? And yet you did industriously let that good motion die for want of blowing up the spark, by following on the consideration which was raised upon its feet. When you have 'began well, who did hinder you' from a further obedience? 'This persuasion comes not of him that calls you,' [Gal. v. 7, 8](#). There was no necessity upon you, to fortify yourselves in your corrupted habits against the attempts of the Spirit. Could you not as well have fallen down before the throne of grace, to have begged grace to second them, as kicked at them, and spurned them away? Was it want of power to do otherwise? or was it not rather your own obstinate wilfulness? Since I appeal to you, whether your own consciences have not tugged at you, and spurred you on at such seasons, why could you not then beg of God, that such a good motion might not have departed out of your coasts? Because a man cannot renew himself, therefore to lie down in sluggishness is not the design of this doctrine.

4. Can you not consider those notions you have be natural light? Man has a conscience which minds him of moral good, and pulls him from evil. No man can deprive himself of these. It will check in those things wherein others commend us, and commend us in those things wherein others accuse us. May we not observe the motions of conscience within us? May we not consider the charge it brings against us for any act committed, so as to avoid the like for the future; and the excusations of conscience, in commending us, so as to do the like acts for the future? As we have a law without us, which we may consider, so we have a conscience within us, which witnesses to the equity of the law, accusing us for what we do contrary to it, and excusing us for what we do in observance of it, [Rom. ii. 15](#); and this in man's corrupt state. Cannot man then observe the dictates of conscience? Can he not find out the sense of this law in his mind, though it be much blurred? Cannot he act like a man, in following the dictates of this rational principle, as well as like a beast follow the allurements of sense? No rational principle in man puts him upon evil, but upon moral good; whatsoever draws him from good, or puts him upon evil, are principles common to him with one brute or other, profit, pleasure, honour, all which are found in some beast or other. Why may not

a man then consider the rational reports of his own conscience, as well as the brutish whisperings of sense? But does not man endeavour to shuffle off his conscience, and is mighty jolly when it keeps silence, or when he can stop its mouth with an excuse? Do not men wilfully choke the sentiments of it, and keep the truth deposited in their souls, in unrighteousness, [Rom. i. 18](#); and like the scorner, 'hear not its rebukes,' [Prov. xiii. 1](#)? Whatsoever man has by the relics of natural light, he may think of. He knows by nature there is a God; he knows something of his attributes, and of his law; may not those be his morning thoughts? Is he not stirred up sometimes to contemplate on them? May he not do it at other times, since this common grace is always with him, and leaves him not till he leaves valuing and embracing its divine assistances? Let it be remembered, that in all this which man may do, the power is to be ascribed to common grace through a mediator, keeping up by his interposition the pillars of the earth, and preserving some relics of natural light, and the seeds of moral righteousness in man, not in the least to be ascribed to bare nature; and that man's corrupt will, stuffed with sinful habits, is the cause he makes no use of this power.

Quest. 2. If we have not an ability to renew ourselves, why does God command us to do so? And why does God make promises to men if they will turn? Is not this a cruelty? as if a man should command another to run a race, and promise to reward him if he did, and yet bind him with fetters that he cannot run? Both the command would be unjust and the promise ridiculous.

Ans. In general. God may command, and his command does not signify a present ability in man.

(1.) He may command, because we have faculties suited to the command in respect of their substance. For the death of a sinner was not a physical death, but a moral. Man lost not his faculties, but the rectitude of them; he lost the purity of his sight, the integrity of his will, but not the understanding and will itself.

(2.) God's command does not signify a present moral ability to perform it. God's command, which acquaints us with our present duty, is no argument of a present power; for if a command signified more than the duty man owes, it signified more than a command in its own nature could signify. God's command to us to renew ourselves implies no more an ability inherent in the creature to do so than Christ's voice to putrefying Lazarus, 'Lazarus arise, come forth,' [John xi. 43](#), implied a power in Lazarus to raise himself, or his speech to the palsied cripple, 'Arise, take up thy bed,' implied a power in himself to do it himself before a supernatural conveyance of it. Do not men exhort every day to sobriety those that have contracted a profound habit of drunkenness and lust, that philosophy does acknowledge it is not possible for them to abstain from; yet no man accuses those that exhort them of impertinence, nor those that chastise them of injustice. God's commands are not the measures of our strength, but the rule of our duty, and do not teach us what we are, but what we should be.

But to clear this more particularly:

God may command, though man has not a present moral ability to renew himself. For [1.] First, Man once had a power to do whatsoever God would command him; he had a power to cleave to God. He had not else, in justice, been capable of any such injunction; there had been ground of a complaint and charge against God, if man had been created defective in any of those abilities necessary for his obedience to this command. The command is just; God would not else have imposed it, because of his righteousness, and every man's conscience testifies that it is highly just he should honour God, love God, and cleave to God. If it were just, then man was capable to perform this command, for man, as a rational creature, is capable of a law, and cannot be governed otherwise; and no law could be given so proper for him as to stand right to his Creator. Since, therefore, the law was just in itself, and since God did justly impose it, man was certainly created by God in a capacity to observe it. No question but God, who furnished other creatures with an ability to attain their several ends, and perform the orders God had set them in at the creation, was no less indulgent to man. He that was not deficient to the lower creatures would not be deficient to the noblest of his sublunary works. He would have been worse in his rank, without a sufficient stock, than other creatures were in theirs. There would not have been a physical goodness and perfection suitable to his station in the world, and his excellency above other creatures. How could God then have pronounced him good, among the rest of his works, if there had been in his creation a natural inability to answer the end of his creation? If God had created man in such a state that he could not do righteously, and yet commanded him to do righteously, and, because he did not, punish him, he would have been unjust; as if a man should command another to reach a thing too high for him, and that when his hands were tied behind him, and because he did not, beat him. This would have been the case had not man had power at first to do righteously. Had man preserved himself in that created state, no just command of God (and it was impossible any unjust command should have proceeded from infinite righteousness) would have been too hard and too high for him.

[2.] God did not deprive man of this ability. Man was not stripped of his original righteousness by God, for man had lost it before ever God spake to him, or passed any sentence upon him after his fall: [Gen. iii. 10](#), 'I was naked.' If God had taken it away without any offence of Adam, he might have expostulated the case. It had been alike unjust, as if God had never given him power at first to observe the command he enjoined him. It would have been unreasonable to require that of man which God himself had made impossible. But God did not take away man's original righteousness. If God had taken it away before man's fall, then man was unrighteous before he fell, and God, taking it away from him while he was perfect, had made him, of an holy and righteous man, unholy and profane; as he that deprives a malefactor of his sight, for his demerit, makes him of seeing blind. If God took it away after he spake to Adam in the garden, it would then follow that Adam was righteous

after his fall till God deprived him of it, and so was innocent while he was sinful, and strong while he was weak. God did not take it away from him before, but had told him that the loss of it would be the natural consequent of his eating the forbidden fruit, [Gen. ii. 17](#), nor after for after we find only temporal punishments threatened. God indeed did judicially deny him the restoration of it, which, as a governor and a judge, he might justly do, resolving to govern him in another manner than before. So that it would be an unjust imputation on God to say, God cut off man's legs, and then commanded him to run, and come to him. What if God did foresee that man would fall; was God therefore the cause of his fall? God's prescience, though it is infallible, is not the cause of a thing, no more than our foreknowledge that the sun will rise to-morrow morning is a cause of rising of it.

[3.] Therefore, since God did not deprive man of it, it follows that man lost it himself, and not barely lost it, but cast it away. He did voluntarily by an inordinate intention of will, cast away this original perfection, and fell a-hunting after his own 'inventions', [Eccles. vii. 29](#). He did not stick to that command God had given him, nor implore God's assistance of him, as by

His natural ability he might have done. He consulted not with his command upon the temptation, but was very willing to cast off that righteousness wherewith God had endowed him, for an affected godhead. Man readily swallowed the bait; he did not debate the business with Eve, 'She gave to her husband with her, and he did eat,' [Gen. iii. 6](#). So that the fault

was wholly in himself, and his present state voluntarily contracted, for though the devil tempted him, yet he had no power to force him. He was easily overcome by him, for it was not a repeated temptation, but a surrender at the first parley.

[4.] Therefore God's right of commanding, and man's obligation of returning and cleaving to God, remains firm. God's right still remains. God gave him a portion to manage, though man prodigally spent it. God may challenge his own. Cannot a master justly challenge that commodity he sent his servant with money to buy, though he spent it in drunkenness and gaming? God gave Adam a sufficient stock; he trifled it away. Must God's right suffer for his folly, and man's crime deprive God of his power to command? The obligation to God is natural, therefore indelible; the corruption of the creature cannot render this first obligation void. Righteousness is a debt the creature, as a rational creature, owes to God, and cannot refuse the payment of it without a crime. Who deprived him of the power of paying? Himself. Should this voluntary embezzlement prejudice God's right of exacting that which the creature cannot be excused from? A debtor, who cannot pay, remains under the obligation of paying. The receipt of a sum of money brings him into the relation of a debtor, and not his ability to pay what he has received. Such a doctrine would free all men who were unable to pay from being debtors, though the sums they owed were never so vast. That judge would be unjust that would excuse a prodigal debtor, because he could not pay when sued by his creditor. No doubt but the devils are bound to serve God, and love him, though by

their revolt they have lost the will to obey him. If, because we have no present power, our obligation to turn to God and obey him ceased, there would be no sin in the world, and consequently no judgments. Who will say, that if a prince had such rebellious subjects that there were little hopes to reclaim them, he should be therefore bound not to command them to return to their duty and obedience? If it be reasonable in a prince, whose rights are limited, shall it not be reasonable in God to exact it, who has an unbounded right over his creature? Either God must keep up his law or abrogate it, or, which is all one, let it lie in the dust. His holiness obliges him to keep up his law; to abrogate it, therefore, would be against his holiness. To declare a willingness that his creature should not love him, should not obey him, would be to declare that which is unjust, because love is a just debt to an amiable object and the chief good, and obedience to a sovereign Lord. Must God change his holiness because man has changed his estate? The obligation of man remaining perpetual, the right of God to demand remains perpetual too, notwithstanding the creature's casting himself into an insolvent condition. If man still owes this duty to God, why may not God exact his right of man? Much more may God call for a right use of those means and gifts he has, as a benefactor, bestowed upon man since his fall. No man will deny this right to God upon serious thoughts. These new gifts and means were given him not only for himself, but for his Lord, to improve for his glory. God may justly require the right use of those moral principles and evangelical means for the ends for which he appointed them.

[5.] It will appear more reasonable, because God demands no more, nay not so much as he required of Adam in innocence. It is but *obedientia redintegrata*, a return in part to that perfect boldness which was inherent in man, and to that obedience in part which was in a great measure due to God. As when a prince demands the return of rebels, he demands a restoration of that subjection which they paid him before. God required a perfect obedience in the first covenant, he requires not so much in the second, so that for want of it a creature shall be cast off; but a sincere obedience is required, though not in degree perfect. Adam had a fundamental power in him to perform that obedience which is required, in faith and repentance, the two great parts of regeneration. Faith is nothing but an embracing and accepting of Christ the mediator. Adam had a power of believing and accepting Christ for his head, had he been proposed to him in paradise, as the mediator of consistency and confirmation, and the *vinculum* of holding him for ever close to God. Had not Adam a power to accept him under this notion, as well as the good angels have accepted him for their head, and worship him as mediator; that is, pay him an obedience as mediator when he comes into the world, [Heb. i. 6](#). Had he not a fundamental power to grieve, though since sin was extraneous to a state of innocence, he could not have exercised that grief for himself, repentance being extraneous to obedience, and unmeet for him in a sinless state? Suppose God had commanded him to grieve for the sins of the fallen angels, Adam having this passion in his nature, might have done it. He might have known what sin was in them, and might

have grieved for the dishonour of God by them; even as our Saviour did grieve for the sins of others, [Mark iii. 5](#), who knew no sin himself. And in grieving for his own sin, there was only a change of the object.

[6.] It is yet more reasonable if we consider, that every natural man thinks he has a power to renew himself, and turn to God when he will practically, though not all of them notionally. What reason then has man to quarrel with God, and accuse him of demanding that which he thinks he can give to God, and will not at present, but take his own time to do it, when he sees it fit? This practical opinion runs in the reins of every natural man under the gospel, as well as in the heathens, which appears by the general wilful delays of men about their eternal concerns, by their vows and resolutions upon the blows of conscience of reforming their lives, and becoming new men without having recourse to the grace of God, or taking any notice of him in their resolves. This I think is a clear case. 'Yet a little more sleep,' says a man, that thinks he can rise time enough when he will, and despatch his business in a moment, [Prov. vi. 10](#). With what face can man accuse God of not giving him power, when he thinks he has power enough himself? or be angry with God for demanding his debt, when he thinks himself in a solvent condition? No man will blame another for requiring that of his servant, which his servant boasts he has power in himself to do. The Israelites thought so when they said, [Exod. xxiv. 3](#), 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do,' without any applications to the grace of God to enable them. All men are like Israel in this; only the regenerate are most sensible of their own impotence, and scarce any man else.

[7.] From all this it follows, that God is not bound to give grace to any; and where he does bestow it, it is an act of his sovereign pleasure. If God has given man power, and never took it away, but it was cast away by man, therefore God's right is not prejudiced, but he may justly demand of man what once he gave him power to do, especially since it is less than what man at first owed him; and when man thinks he has power to pay him, it will evidently follow, that God is not bound to give any new power. If God were bound to give a new power to accept of the gospel, he were then unjust not to confer it; if he be not bound, it is of mere grace that he bestows it. God proposes pardon to all upon such conditions, but he is not bound to give the condition to any; he commands all to renew their obedience to him, but he is not bound to renew any one person. He gives the command to turn, as a lawgiver and governor; he gives the grace to some to turn, as a benefactor. It is grace therefore, not debt. When God confers it, it is an act of his compassionate mercy; when he denies it, it is an act of his just sovereignty. He may, if he please, 'suffer all nations to walk in their own ways,' [Acts xiv. 16](#). Yet if he please to propose the means of grace to any, the very knowledge of those mysteries of heaven is a peculiar gift, as well as the outward proposal: [Matt. xiii. 11](#), 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' If we improve reason to the highest, God is not obliged to give us grace,

no more than if a beast improved sense to the highest, he were bound to give him reason. Though if there could be a man found in any age of the world, who did improve reason to the utmost of his power, I would not doubt God's giving him the addition of supernatural grace, out of the largeness of his bounty, though still there is no obligation upon God, because man does no more than his duty.

And that God does not give grace to all to whom the means are offered, and yet does command them to turn, and promise to receive them;—

(1.) It does not entrench upon his sincerity in his proposals. His proposals are serious, though he knows man will not receive them without an over-powering grace; and though he be resolved not to give the assistance of his grace to every one under those means, but leave them to the liberty of their own wills. The gospel is to be considered as a command ordering men to believe, or as a promise alluring men to be renewed, by representing to them the happiness of such a state. Consider it as a command, God is serious in it, though he resolve not to give grace to all to whom the precept comes, for under this consideration of a command it is a declaration of man's duty, and a demonstration of God's sovereign authority. Does God's resolution of not giving grace weaken the obligation of man to his duty, or diminish God's authority, or give ground to man to charge him with insincerity? Consider it as a promise, does it hinder God's seriousness in it if he resolves not to give the condition of it to all? It is sufficient to show God's seriousness in it, to declare, that if men will be regenerate, it will be very pleasing to him; that he will make good to them what he has promised, that if they be renewed, he will make good every tittle of the promise to them; and if they will seek, and ask, and knock, he will not be wanting to them to assist them.

(2.) It does not disparage his wisdom to command that to man which he knows man will not do without his grace, and so make promises to man upon the doing it. If man indeed had not a faculty naturally fitted for the object, it might entrench upon God's wisdom to make commands and promises to such a creature as it would be to command a beast to speak. But man has a faculty to understand and will, which makes him a man; and there is a disposition in the understanding and will which consists in an inclination determined to good or evil, which makes us not to be men, but good or bad men, whereby we are distinguished from one another, as by reason and will we are from plants and beasts. Now the commands and exhortations are suitable to our nature, and respect not our reason as good or bad, but simply as reason. These commands presuppose in us a faculty of understanding and will, and a suitableness between the command and the faculty of a reasonable creature. This is the reason why God has given to us his law and gospel, his commands, not because we are good or bad men, but because we are men endued with reason, which other creatures want, and therefore are not capable of government by a command. Our blessed Lord and Saviour did not exhort infants, though he blessed them, because they were not arrived to the use of reason, yet he exhorted the Jews, many of whose wills he knew were not determined

to good, and whom he told that they would die in their sins. And though God had told them, [Jer. xiii.](#), that they could no more change themselves than an Ethiopian could his skin, yet he expostulates with them why they 'would not be made clean;' verse 27 'O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' Because, though they had an ill disposition in their judgment, yet their judgment remained, whereby to discern of exhortations if they would. To present a concert of music to a deaf man that cannot hear the greatest sound were absurd, because sounds are the object of hearing; but commands and exhortations are the object, not of this or that good constitution of reason, but of reason itself.

(3.) Neither does it disagree with his justice. It is so far from being unjust for God to demand what men are obliged to do, though he knows that they will not do it, that God would be unjust to himself if he did not demand it, if he let men trample upon his rights without demanding restitution of them. If a prince sets forth edicts to rebels to return, and promise them pardon upon their returning, though he knows they are rebelliously bent, that they will not entertain a thought of coming again under his sceptre, but will still be in arms, and draw down his wrath upon them, will not all interpret this to be an act of clemency and goodness in the prince? Neither is God an acceptor of persons, because he does not give grace unto all; for may he not do with his own what he please without injustice? Those to whom we give alms have reason to thank us; those to whom we give not an alms have no reason to complain; we have gratified the one, but we have done no wrong to the other. We are all by nature criminals, deserving death; should God leave us in that deplorable estate wherein he found us, can we accuse him of injustice? Those that by grace are snatched out of the pit, have reason to acknowledge it an admirable favour, as indeed it is; those that are destitute of grace, and by their own wilful rejection left to sink to the bottom, cannot impute their unhappiness to him; for he left them not without witness; he presented them the word, exhorted them to hearken to him; but, instead of paying their duty, they fiercely rejected him, abhorred his exhortations, and gave themselves over to sin and vice. If a man proclaim by a crier that such that can bring such a mark shall receive such an alms, he sends this private mark to some, they come and receive an alms. Had he not power to do what he pleased with his own, to send his distinguishing token to whom he pleased? What injustice is done to the other, to whom he sends not this mark?

We have shown that God may command. Let us see why God does command, when he knows man has no power to renew himself?

1. The first reason is,

To make us sensible of our impotency. The design of God is not to signify our power to perform it, but sensibly to affect us with our inability, that we may be the better prepared for a remedy; as the moral law was given with such terrifying marks, to make men despair in themselves, and the ceremonial law annexed to it, to give some glimpse of a Mediator in whom they might have strength. And therefore when the Israelites were so affected, [Deut.](#)

xviii. 16-18, as to desire not to hear the voice of the Lord in that manner, nor to see that great fire any more which attended the law, that they might not die, he commends them for it: verse 17, 'They have well spoken that which they have spoken.' God is highly pleased with this sense of their own inability to answer the terms of the first covenant, since it makes them fly for help and supply to the prophet of the second covenant. The cabalists therefore say, that the law was given to take away the venom of the serpent; that is, not that we should fulfil the law, but that we might learn how far we were swerved from the duty we owed to God, and how unable to gain the happiness we had lost. A conceit of self-sufficiency secretly lurks in every one of us; we should think ourselves gods to ourselves if we saw not the picture of our own weakness in the spirituality of the command. Therefore, though we cannot ourselves perform this command of regeneration, it is necessary it should be directed to us, to make us abject in our eyes, and strip us of all confidence in the flesh, which is the first step toward a being endued with the Spirit; to make us hang down our proud plumes, and sink into that despair in ourselves, which is necessary to the superstructure of a saving faith. It is necessary the law should be commanded, to make sin appear exceeding sinful, to give us a true prospect of ourselves in the glass of the command: the rectitude of it shows us our crookedness; the holiness of it, our impurity; the justice of it, our unrighteousness; the goodness of it, our wickedness; and the spirituality of it, our carnality and fleshliness. God does not command us (though we have no power) to upbraid and triumph over us, but to lay us low, and humble us.

2. To make us sensible of the grace of God, and urge us to have recourse to it. It is necessary that man should understand the perfection of divine righteousness, and what the condition of man was before the fall, that thereby he may understand the necessity of the remedy, and be more willing to come under God's wing than Adam has to keep under it; but without a sense of his own weakness man would never come to God. God commands us, not that he expects we should renew ourselves, for he knows we cannot; but that being acquainted with our feeble frame, we should implore his grace to turn us, and have recourse to him, who delights to be sought unto and depended upon by his creature. That this command of renewing ourselves, and returning to our due obedience, is given to this end, is evident by the promise of the gospel, which did accompany the command, both to encourage and direct men where to find assistance for the performance of what the first covenant exacts, and the second accepts. Therefore, with the commands of the law, there is the promise of a great prophet to teach them, an ordaining typical sacrifices to relieve them, and the gospel, under the mask of the ceremonial law, attended the fiery and impossible commands of the moral. God might have exacted his right without making any promise, it had been *summum jus*; but God exacts not his right now, but with a promise; where there is *jus* in one, and *remissio juris* in the other. And very frequently in the Scripture, where the command is given to show us our duty, yet a promise is joined to it, to show that though obedience be

our duty, yet sanctification is God's work, as [Lev. xx. 8](#), 'Ye shall keep my statutes and do them;' whereupon it immediately follows, 'I am the Lord which sanctify you.' The precept is to acquaint us with our duty; the promise, to acquaint us with the sight of a gracious ability; the precept minds us of our debt, the promise minds us of the means to pay it: what is required in the precept is encouraged in the promise. Every precept, being a part of the law, is to 'shut us up' to faith, and to 'bring us to Christ,' [Gal. iii. 23, 24](#). God makes us amends; that as he requires of us what we lost by another's fault, he has provided us a remedy by another's righteousness, which we never performed; and by his own Spirit, which we never purchased, if we will but seek it. If God did work it in us without commanding us to work it ourselves, we could not have a foundation to make such sensible acknowledgements of his grace and omnipotent kindness. It is our work as a due debt; it is God's work as a fruit of his grace; [Isa. xxvi. 12](#), 'Thou hast wrought all our works in us.' The promise, therefore, of a new heart and a new spirit, is made indefinitely; none are aimed in it, nor any excluded, that will but seek it. And supposing they are predictions rather than promises, yet they run in the nature of a promise: they are to be pleaded, for God 'will be inquired after concerning them;' and the fulfilling of them to the soul is as pleadable as the fulfilling other prophecies to the church; the grounds of the plea are the same in both, the truth of God: [Ezek. xxxvi. 37](#), 'Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;' which may reasonably be concluded to respect the whole antecedent promising discourse of God.

3. These commands and exhortations are of use to clear the justice of God upon obstinate sinners. God is a judge, and judges by law; commands therefore are necessary, because a rational creature is only governable by law. If God were not a lawgiver, he could not be a judge; his judicial proceedings depend upon his legislative power. Men being to be judged by their works, must have some law as the rule of those works; and his law is no more than the first law in innocence, that is, to return to obedience and righteousness. These commands and exhortations are the whips and scourges of perverse consciences, whereby they are galled while they obey not the motions of them, and render them inexcusable and unworthy of mercy in despising the conditions God requires of them, and make the case of Sodom 'more tolerable in the day of judgment' than the condition of such men, [Mat. xi. 24](#). We are apt to bring an unreasonable charge against God of cruelty and injustice, as though his punishments did not consist with righteousness. God therefore shows us our duty, and demands it of us, and it is confessed by us to be our duty; man is therefore deservedly punished, because he does wilfully cherish the old nature in him, the fountain of all sin; he has the truth, and he holds it in possession, but in unrighteousness, therefore the wrath of God is justly revealed from heaven against that unrighteousness of his, [Rom. i. 18](#). God calls sinners, though he knows they will not renew themselves, as men send servants to demand the possession of a piece of ground, though they know it will not be delivered to them; but they do

it that they may more conveniently bring their action against such a person that will not surrender. So upon God's command to men to be renewed, his justice is more apparent upon their refusal; as he sent Moses to Pharaoh, though he knew before that Pharaoh would not hearken to him. This punishment is only accidental to the gospel, it becomes the savour of death *per accidens*, because of the unbelief of those that reject it; the gospel is designed for the salvation of men, not for their condemnation. If the corruption of man produces condemnation to himself, must God abstain from doing good to the world? There is not a man but abuses the light of the sun which shines upon him, and the mercies God gives him, and thereby brings wrath upon himself, and God knows they will do so; would we have God, therefore, to put out the light of the sun, and divest the earth of its fruitfulness? Shall God lay aside his right of commanding, and take away the preaching of the gospel, and so excellent a thing as the happy revelation of his gracious promises and exhortations, because many men by their wilfulness bring the just wrath of God upon them for their refusal? Will any man accuse our blessed Lord and Saviour, when he comes to judgment, that he did them wrong to come and die for mankind, and cause the news and ends of his death to be published, and exhort sinners thereupon to believe in him? Surely men's consciences shall be full of convictions of their own wilfulness, and the equity of God's justice thereupon.

4. The commands and exhortations are of use to bring men to God, according to the nature of rational creatures, and also to keep them with God. Man not having lost his reason, though he has lost his rectitude, cannot be drawn to God in a rational way but by cords proper to man; for he is a creature governable only by laws, and therefore must have laws suited to his nature; and commands and exhortations are so, for the weakness brought upon men to answer them is by their own defection. God does not bring men to him by instinct, as he brought the beasts to Adam, or the creatures into Noah's ark; such a conversion would not be reasonable, nor spiritual, nor agreeable to God, no more than the obedience of the beasts to Noah. God therefore draws men by commands, and promises, and exhortations thereupon convenient to the nature of man, accommodated to the rational capacity of the creature; for man being created after the image of God, ought to be conducted and governed after another manner than other creatures. The grace of God therefore working suitably to the nature of man, cannot be conceived by us in any other way than in this of commands and exhortations. And when men are renewed, the commands for perfect regeneration are still incumbent upon them (though they cannot attain it in this life), to stir up their hearts to an exercise of that gracious ability they have to walk in the ways of holiness, and to that end to a reliance on the grace of God. The promises are given to them to inflame them to a love of holiness, and to show them where their chief strength lies; this appears plainly to be the intent of the Spirit of God in that command and promise, [Philip. ii. 12, 13](#), 'Work out your own salvation; for it is God that works in you to will and to do.' He writes to those already regenerate, Work out your salvation, use your gracious power, and be encouraged

by the assistance God gives you. Use your own power as if there were no grace to help you in the performance; depend upon the grace of God which works in you both to will and to do, as if you had no power at all of any motion in yourselves.

So that to sum up the whole of this later discourse, the impotence of man does not excuse him.

1. Because the commands of the gospel are not difficult in themselves to be believed and obeyed. If we were commanded things that were impossible in their own nature, as to shoot an arrow as high as the sun, or leap up to the top of the highest mountain at one start, the very command carries its excuse with it in the impossibility of the thing enjoined. But the precept of regeneration and restoring to righteousness is easy to be comprehended, it is backed with clear and manifest reason, and proposed with a promise of happiness which is very suitable to the natural appetite of our souls. To command a thing simply impossible is not congruous to the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of God; it would not be justice, but cruelty. No wise man will invite another man by any promises to do that which is simply impossible; no just judge will punish a man for not observing such a precept; no righteous and merciful person would impose such a command. But these commands of the gospel are not impossible in their own nature, but in regard of our perversity and contumacy. The command of righteousness was possible when first given, and impossible since by our own folly; impossible in our voluntary corrupted nature, and by reason of our voluntarily cherished corruption. The change is not in the nature of the law, but in the nature of the creature; and what is impossible to nature is possible to grace, and grace may be sought for the performance of them.

2. Because we have a foundation in our natures for such commands, therefore man's weakness does not excuse him. It had been unjust for God to have commanded Adam in innocence to fly, and give him no wings; this had been above Adam's natural power, he could not have done it, though he would fain have obeyed God, because his nature was destitute of all force for such a command. It would be strange if God should invite the trees or beasts to repent, because they have no foundation in their nature to entertain commands and invitations to obedience and repentance; for trees have no sense, and beasts have no reason to discern the difference between good and evil. If God did command a man that never had eyes to contemplate the sun, man might wonder, since such a man never had organs for such an action. But God addresses himself to men that have senses open to objects, and understandings to know, and wills to move, affections to embrace objects. These understandings are open to anything but that which God does command, their wills can will anything but that which God does propose. The command is proportioned to the natural faculty, and the natural faculty proportioned to the excellency of the command. We have affections, as love and desire. In the command of loving God and loving our neighbour, there is only a change of the object of our affections required; the faculties are not weak by

nature, but by the viciousness of nature, which is of our own introduction. It is strange, therefore, that we should excuse ourselves, and pretend we are not to be blamed, because God's command is impossible to be observed, when the defect lies not in the want of a natural foundation, but in our own giving up ourselves to the flesh and the love of it, and in a wilful refusal of applying our faculties to their proper objects, when we can employ those faculties with all vehemence about those things which have no commerce with the gospel.

3. Because the means God gives are not simply insufficient in themselves. God does afford men beams of light, he makes clear discoveries, as it is, [Rom. i. 19](#), 'He has showed it to them, "efanero", 'it is manifest in them. He displays in their hearts some motions of his Spirit, produces some velleities. The standing of the world under the cries of so many hideous sins, is a daily sermon of God's kindness and patience in bearing up the pillars of it, and is a standing exhortation to repentance; as [Rom. ii. 4](#), 'The forbearance, long-suffering, and goodness of God leads to repentance.' The object is intelligible: 'The word is near us, in our mouths, in our hearts;' it is apprehensible in itself, [Rom. x. 6, 7](#). The revelation is as plain as the surface of the heavens, [Ps. xix. 1-3](#), applied to the preaching of the gospel. [Rom. x. 18](#). That men are not renewed, and turned to God, is not for want of a sufficient external revelation, but from the hardness of the heart; not from any insufficiency of the means, but the depravity and wickedness of the soul to whom those means are offered. The commands and means of the gospel are no more weak in themselves than the law was, but weak through the flesh, by reason of the inherent corruption man has fastened in himself, [Rom. viii. 3](#). Would not the hundredth part of any revelation of some worldly object, connatural to man's corrupt heart, be sufficient in itself to put him upon motion to it, and embraces of it? The insufficiency does both not lie in the external means, for the gospel is an act of mercy and grace; the call is an act of kindness. It is clear to man that God offers; it is clear that God will accept, if man will embrace his counsel; and shall this be said to be insufficient, because man will reject it?

4. Because this impotence in man is rather a wilfulness than a simple weakness, therefore man's pretended weakness does not excuse him from the command. It is not a weakness arising from a necessity of nature, but an enmity of will, whereby some other apparent good is beloved above God, and some creature preferred before him. There is a double impotence, *merae infirmitatis*, which is a want of power in the hand, when there is a readiness in the will to perform, or *malignitatis*, which is seated in the will and affections, whereby though a man has a power to perform, yet he cannot because he will not: he will abhor any return to God, and will not be whetted by his promise to any endeavour. A simple impotency deserves pity, for it is a rational excuse, but an obstinate perversity is so far from an excuse that it is an aggravation. The deeper the habit of obstinacy, the more inexcusable the person. What a ridiculous excuse would this be, to say to God, (1.) that I ought not to be obliged to restore myself to righteousness, and obey the command of the gospel, because I am of so

perverse a disposition that I will not obey, and will not be restored; or (2.) that God is bound to restore to him that will to obey and renew himself, otherwise he is guilty of no crime. The first would be ridiculous, and both impious. What hinders any man from being regenerate under the call of the gospel, but a moral weakness, which consists in an imperious inclination to evil, and a rooted indisposition in corrupt reason and will to believe and repent? And here the Scripture lays it upon the hardness of the heart, [Rom. ii. 5](#), and a rebellious walking after our own thoughts: [Isa. lxv. 2](#), 'I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walk in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.' We are impotent and cannot, because we are rebellious and will not. For since man has an understanding capable to weigh arguments on both sides, and see the advantage of the good proposed, and the disadvantage of the evil tempting, if he does the evil, and refuses the good, is not the fault clearly in his will? And when by a custom in sin we ripen the power of our evil habits, we contract an impossibility of doing the good required, and casting out the evil forbidden. This does in no sort excuse us, because it is an inability contracted by ourselves. God himself threatens punishment to the Israelites, when he confesses that they could not attain to innocence: [Hosea viii. 5](#), 'My anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocence?' "lo yuchlu"; how long can they not? Purity or innocence. They had raised such an habit in them, by casting off voluntarily the thing that is good, ver. 3, that they could not divest themselves of it, which was so far from excusing them that it sharpened the anger of God against them.

5. This weakness does not excuse from obedience to this command, because God denies no man strength to perform what he commands, if he seek it at his hands. No man can plead that he would have been regenerate, and turned to God, and could not, for though we have not power to renew ourselves, yet God is ready to confer power upon us if we seek it. Where did God ever deny any man sufficient strength, that did wait upon him in serious and humble supplications, and conscientiously used the means to procure it. A man cannot indeed merit grace, or dispose himself for it, so that it must by a natural necessity come into his soul, as a form does into matter upon dispositions to it. But if a man will do what he can do, if he will put no obstacle to grace, by a course of sin, would not God, out of his infinite bounty to his creatures, and out of that general love whereby he would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, give him special grace? Has not our Saviour made a promise in his first sermon to the multitude, that God 'will give good things to them that ask him,' with a *much more* than men give good gifts to their children, [Mat. vii. 11](#). They were not only his disciples that he preached that sermon to, but the multitude, comparing it with [Mat. v. 1](#), and [Mat. vii. 28](#). Has not God declared, that he 'delights not in the death of a sinner,' [Ezek. xxxiii. 11](#), and does he not out of his infinite goodness condescend to beseech us to be reconciled to him? Will not the same infinite goodness bow itself down to form a new image in them that use the means to be reconciled and conformed to him, as

much as they can? Has not our blessed Saviour already given a testimony of his affection to such endeavours, in loving the young man for his outward observation of the law, [Mark x. 21](#), who wanted but one thing only to pass him into a gracious state, the refusal whereof barred him of it? And shall not he have a choicer affection to those that strive to observe the rules he has left in his gospel? Will he not be pleased with such motions in his creatures towards their own happiness? Will he not further that wherein he delights? Think not therefore to justify yourselves at the bar of God for your sloth, because you are too weak to renew yourselves. It will not help you then. The question will then be asked, Did you ever seriously beg it, as for your lives? Did God ever desert you when you would fight against sin, when you set yourselves seriously and dependently on him for grace? God gives us talents, but by our sloth we embezzle them. It is upon that score Christ lays it, [Mat. xxv. 26](#), 'Thou wicked and slothful servant.' God has not promised to furnish you with more talents, when you improve not the talents you have already; non-improvement of them cuts oft all pleas men may make against God upon the account of their impotence. As there never was a renewed man, but acknowledged his regeneration as a fruit of God's grace, so there was never any man that can say, he did use his greatest industry in trading with the talents God entrusted him with, and God refused him the supply of his special grace. If you have not a new heart and a heart of flesh, ask your own hearts whether ever you did seriously inquire of God to do it for you. God never fails them that diligently seek him.

For the use of this:

1. For information.

(1.) See the strange misery of man by his fall. We cannot be the authors of strength to our own souls, since we are despoiled of that vital principle which constituted us spiritually living in the first creation. How are we sunk many degrees below other creatures, who always have, and still do answer the ends of their creation, when we, wretched we, have lost both the will and power to answer the end of ours? We can understand, will, move, but not as man in innocence could. In ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, can bring forth nothing spiritually good and acceptable to God; a mere composition of enmity to good and propensity to evil, of weakness and wickedness, of hell and death; a fardel of impotence and conceitedness, perversity and inability, every way miserable unless infinite compassion relieve us. We have no more freedom than a chained galley slave till Christ redeem us; no more strength than a putrefied carcass till Christ raise us, an unlamented hardness, an unregarded obstinacy, an insensible palsy spread over every part, a dreadful *cannot* and *will not* triumphing in the whole soul. The heart turned into pleasure with its own wounds and chains is an amazing misery both to good men and angels, because it is so great, and yet unbewailed to see a man endued with a soul so rare, even with its crack, that the heathens thought it to be a particle of God; an understanding that can peer into heaven, fathom the earth by contemplative inquisitions, yet cannot strike up a spark of enlightened reason about everlasting

happiness; that that reason, which understands a worldly interest, should be so blind, so weak, about a heavenly bliss! A short-sighted mind, that cannot cast a look so high as to spiritual things, nor rise up in one holy thought without the grace of God; a perverse will, that cannot commission one spiritual desire; a weak arm, that cannot strengthen itself to grasp and hold one spiritual gift; a dry wilderness, that cannot issue out a tear till God open the fountain of the great deep of grace to flow in upon it; a hard heart, that relents not under afflictions on earth, nor could under the flames of hell without grace! What a woeful thing is it to be miserable, and have no strength to be happy! to look into a law, and behold it wholly spiritual, and to reflect upon our souls, and behold them wholly carnal! [Rom. vii. 14](#), to find a command of regeneration in the judgment of our own consciences, just for God to impose, good for us to receive, and an utter inability to square ourselves according to it!

(2.) See the vast power of sin. It is this that has cast its infectious roots so deep in our souls, that it is impossible for us to pluck up this degenerate plant. The first defection from God was of that nature, that it did *per se*, of itself, produce an inability in us, as sickness does in a body, or disjuncting a member does weakness in a man; otherwise man, after he had sinned, had been found in strength, and had had a power to do good, till God by punishment had taken away that power, and inflicted a contrary weakness, which would be very absurd to affirm. Adam threw off the royal robe of righteousness; and in all those ages which are run out since, man could not find by all the inquiries of nature how to put it on again without a supernatural strength. This sin that has taken hold of us, keeps us down, that we cannot lift up our heads to divine knowledge, or reach out our hands to perform any divine precept, it is this has emptied us of our treasure, stripped us of our strength, made us as poor as Job upon the dunghill, and as feeble as the cripple at the pool; and which is worse than this, has not only deprived us of our health and strength to cure ourselves, but of our will to be healed by another; and possessed us with such a frenzy that we are friends to our madness, and enemies to those that would deliver us from it; we are all possessed with a legion of devils, that makes us cry out against Christ before we be turned to him, [Mark v. 7](#). It is this first poison diffusing itself in the heart of Adam has made us all by nature a generation of vipers, and infected our very tongues, that we cannot, being evil, speak that which is good, that is, perfectly and spiritually good, as it is [Mat. xii. 34](#), 'O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things?' and poisoned our souls at the very root, that not one grape of grace can grow upon the thorn of nature. All the coin of our actions bears the impression of the evil treasure in our hearts, [Luke vi. 43-45](#).

(3.) We may from hence see the groundlessness of any conceits rising in us, of the power and freedom of our own wills to anything spiritually good. This conceit reigns in most men's hearts naturally; it is a legacy left to our natures by the will of Adam. The not submitting our wills to the will of God, in a way of humble waiting upon him, is the source of the misery

of mankind; such imaginations will creep up in our hearts, that our understandings can aspire to all knowledge, our wills spring up in grace, as naturally as a clear fountain in pure waters. The cause of such conceits is the ignorance both of the depth and largeness of the wound original sin has made in all our faculties. Paul, while a pharisee, without question was of this mind, and cried up the liberty of the will as much as he cried down the truth of the Christian religion; he was 'alive without the law once,' [Rom. vii. 9](#). But when he takes out the lesson of the sinfulness of natural concupiscence, [Rom. vii. 7](#), the experience of his slavery, and being sold under sin, grew up with the notion of the extent of original corruption, and he found himself a mere dead man, as may be observed in several passages in [Rom. vii](#). Every man is born with this conceit, since we find the only peculiar nation God had in the world asserting it in the whole body of them, in the face of God, [Exod. xxiv. 8](#). When Moses told them all the words and judgments of the Lord, all the people answered with one voice, 'All the words which the Lord has said will we do;' and ver. 7, 'All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.' Not one man among them duly sensible of natural slavery, nor making any application to God for grace to keep them; but as confident of the strength of their mutable wills as if they had as much power as the first man in innocence. This vain confidence has its bitter root in the imagination of all Israel; and that it may not appear to be a sudden and rash passion, they assert it again more solemnly upon second thoughts: ver. 7, 'All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.'

[1.] It is a high piece of pride. To boast of a great estate, when a man has not a farthing in his purse, is very ridiculous, or for a slave to brag of liberty, with his chains upon his hands and feet. What a vain self-reflection is it when we are bound naturally in our sins, as a slave in his shackles, with Satan's padlock upon us, till the Son make us free indeed! [John viii. 36](#). It is the very moth of pride which ate out the beauty of Adam's garment who, whilst he would stand upon his own bottom, laid the scene of his own ruin; he affected to be his own conductor, and proved his own cut-throat; and aspiring to an independence on God, fell down into the dungeon of slavery to, and dependency upon, Satan. It is a pride like that of Adam, an invasion of God's property, an affecting to be that by ourselves which we can only be by Christ; it is an arrogance like that of the Babel builders, to think by this slime of nature to raise up a spiritual building as high as heaven. We sin over again more formally the sin of Adam, by affecting an equality with God.

[2.] It is a disparagement to God. It is an unquestionable idolatry, and never yet practised, to set up any creature as the author of the temporal good of the whole world. Is it not more to set up many thousands of free wills as the authors of the spiritual good of the creature, to make every man's will an idol? Is the robbing God of the glory of his grace less criminal than the divesting him of the glory of his outward work? Or are the works of grace in the soul more inconsiderable than those of nature? It disparages Gods grace; it makes his grace subsequent, not preventing; it makes the highest spiritual work to be the seed of man, not

the seed of God. If this conceit takes place in your hearts, God is like to be without much praise from his creature. Peter will be no more beholden to God than Judas, Paul no more than Simon Magus; both had the outward revelation, and so both owe a praise to God; but what further debt of praise did Paul owe to God, if his regeneration sprang forth into being by the power of his own will, without any further contribution from God than an objective proposal? It takes off the crown of glory from the head of Christ; for though it will be acknowledged that he bruised the head of the common serpent by the power of his death, yet the destruction of the works of the serpent in our hearts, which is our immediate happiness, was wrought by the seed of free will. It would be strange that the apostle Paul should be so over-seen, to give such praise to the grace of God manifested to him, if he had not been particularly beholden to that for the turning of his heart. By this God is beholden much to the creature's will, in being a great cause of keeping up the interest of God in the world, which had no footing, notwithstanding his revelation, without the compliance of man's will, untouched by any supernatural grace. Such a conceit of man's power seems to envy God the glory of his whole grace. And such a bitter root of this, I doubt, may be one secret cause that we are so heart-tied and tongue-tied in the praises of God for his grace.

[3.] It takes away a great part of the glory of the Spirit's work in the world. Was his convincing the world of sin and righteousness only external by the objective proposals of the word, and fitting the apostles for the propagation of that convictive revelation? Was he to stand only as a spectator to behold which way the motion of free will would cast the balance? Is he to preserve grace in the heart? and is there not more need of his creating it there, than preserving it after? Is there more danger of the devil's quenching the flame kindled in the soul, than there was of its first touch upon the heart? Is he a Spirit of grace only to propose it, not to work it? The Spirit makes no verbal proposal of it, that is by man; if an inward proposal barely by applying it to the understanding, has not man as much power to do that, as to work it in his will? How can it be a well of water springing up to eternal life, if it works nothing efficaciously upon the heart? This secret pride and conceit in the heart may be a cause we make so few applications to the Spirit of God, taking little notice of him in our attempts.

[4.] It puts a bar to all evangelical duties. It makes us cleave to ourselves rather than to God, and presume upon our own strength rather than rely upon his. The heathens (as Seneca) asserted, that it was a silly thing for a man to desire that of heaven which he had power to do without it. Why should we go to him for renewing grace, when it is in our own power to renew ourselves? May it not be said to us, as it was in another case, 'Why trouble you the master?' As long as we think we can spin a righteousness out of our own bowels, we will never go to Christ for a robe of his weaving, though never so rich. And while we think we can rear a stately spiritual building by our own skill, we shall never desire the art of another workman. Our Saviour would have nothing to do with his fullness, if He stood

in no need of it; and what need had we of it, if we could despatch this great business of grace ourselves? This secret imagination in the heart is one cause of the neglect of duties, especially prayer, or of a slightness and coldness in it.

[5.] This conceit endangers a man's destruction, by encouraging a delay of using the means necessary to this work in God's ordinary course. What sensualist would not delay using means for repentance, who conceits he can repent when he will, and that to will is in his own power? This makes men think they have a key to unlock heaven at their pleasure, and have the command of the treasuries of grace; and therefore are afraid to attend upon evangelical means, for fear they should be put upon serious reflections too soon. The common sentiments of men are a sad evidence of this; you shall hear many acknowledge their weakness in other things, but not in this; they cannot leave such a course of sin, they cannot pray with so much affection, yet their hearts are right, they can repent and believe when they will, that is in their own power; which makes them sluggish and careless at the calls of God. But what a folly this is, let Solomon witness, who sets the fool's cap upon such confidence; 'He that trusts in his own heart is a fool,' [Prov. xxviii. 26](#); it is to trust in a weathercock that is mutable with every wind of temptation. To depend upon our wills, is to depend upon the oldest and the most certain bankrupt in the world, that broke as soon as it was set up, many ages since, and never recovered itself. Who told you, therefore, that you can melt the stone within you at your pleasure? that you can cast the strong man out of your wills without a stronger than he? But suppose the grounds were rational, and that you had a power to cure yourselves; the consequent is very irrational, for that cause to delay it; for what man in his wits would endure a wound or deformity many years, because he can heal or beautify himself at his pleasure in a moment? Take heed therefore of such fancies of your own power to regenerate yourselves, and upon that account to neglect that which you have power to do; but imitate Ephraim with all speed, notwithstanding your cheating imagination, and cry out, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,' [Jer. xxxi. 18](#).

(4.) It informs us, that regeneration is not wrought merely by moral suasion, or only by exhortations; then it would principally be the work of the will of man. Our Saviour had a will to preach to all in Jerusalem, but he had not a will to quicken all: [John v. 21](#), 'the Son quickens whom he will;' so that it depended upon his inward operation, not only upon his outward exhortations. It is true there is a suasion in the ear by the word, but the persuasion is in the heart by grace; the suasion in the word may cause some rational reflections as a moral cause, but no spiritual motion towards God as a physical cause. Men are not disputed or exhorted, but created into grace; the proposal of a good by the understanding is not always embraced by the will, unless it be a good suitable and connatural to those habits in the will. Where, therefore, there is no suitable habit planted in the will, rational reflections in the mind and conscience are not like to prevail much.

[1.] If it were only by suasion and exhortation, the most eloquent preaching were like to do most good. Whereas it never was God's method to found conversion upon the 'words of man's wisdom,' though 'enticing' in themselves, but upon the 'demonstration and power of the Spirit,' [1 Cor. ii. 4](#). The most eloquent preaching would then most fill the gospel nets. And the reports of that rhetorical prophet Isaiah would have been soon believed, which were not so, because 'the arm of the Lord was not (always) revealed with them,' [Isa. liii. 1](#). If any words, as words, were like to have an edge to cut deep into the soul, they must be the words of our Saviour; since 'never man' (even in the judgment of some of his enemies) 'spoke as he spake.' But though 'his lips were full of grace,' [Ps. xiv. 2](#), most of his hearers' hearts were empty of it under his ministry; not the eloquence and pressing reasons of Christ, nor the wrath of God revealed from heaven, can reclaim the heart of man, without the power of grace. The Pharisees were prouder under Christ's melting bowels, and the Jews harder under God's wrathful blows, [Isa. i. 5](#); neither hearing nor feeling will prevail upon hardened souls.

[2.] What bare exhortations can work upon a dead man? Can a well composed oration, setting out all the advantages of life and health raise a dead man, or cure a diseased body? You may as well exhort a blind man to behold the sun, and prevail as much. No man ever yet imagined, that the strewing a dead body with flowers would raise it to life; no more can the urging a man, spiritually dead, with eloquent motives, ever make him to open his eyes and stand upon his feet. Did our Saviour come out of his grave, or could he ever have done it, by mere suasion, without the power of God to raise him? [Eph. i. 19, 20](#). The working of mighty power is a title too high for the capacity of mere moral exhortations. A mere suasion does not confer a strength, but suppose it in a man, for he is only persuaded to use the power which he has already.

[3.] Does not daily experience testify the contrary? Have you never discoursed with some profane, loose fellow, so pressingly, that he seemed to be planet-struck at every reasoning, shaken out of his excuses for his sinful course, yet not shaken out of his sin; that you might as soon have persuaded the tide at full sea to retreat, or a lion to change his nature, as have overcome him by all your arguments. Have you not seen many at a stand in sin, by the force of some convincing reasons, return again to their vomit? Have not many tears at command in anything that concerns themselves, the loss of some estate, or some dear friend, but in the things of God, in his dishonours, as dry as the parched earth? That you may almost as soon extract water out of a rock, as repentance for sin out of their stony hearts. So that it is not the faint breath of man, or the rational considerations of the mind are able to do this work, without the mighty pleadings and powerful operations of that great *Paraclete* or Advocate, the Spirit, to alter the temper of the soul.

[4.] There is no likelihood that any man in the world would be renewed, if it were only by moral suasion. Satan's logic would be stronger than God's; his arguments would more

suit our imagined interest, and our real enmity against God; his persuasions would find more kindred in the principles of our minds and habits of our wills to take fire by him, than the suasion allurements of God, which will meet with nothing in our hearts but contrariety to them. The deceitfulness of sin within us, and the subtilty of Satan without us, both being active as well as persuading adversaries, would fix us in our rebellion, without a contrary power, as well active as exhortative, and God would do no more towards our restoration than Satan does towards our destruction, since the devil can only propose to us, not by any physical touch incline our wills. We are wholly inclined to him in our own natures, in love with the knife that cuts our throats, and too fond of our shackles ever to knock them off. The will is so enamoured with its corrupt habit, that were this work left barely to self will, and no other power employed in it than exhortative, not one person were every likely to come unto God.

[5.] If it were wrought by suasion, the will would have the whole praise of the work. For suasion or exhortation is nothing else but the proposing arguments to the understanding, but the motion, according to those arguments, is wholly from the will, which has a power to receive them or refuse them. God, indeed, would be the first speaker, but not the first agent; God would be only the assisting cause, as all moral causes are, he would only assist the motion of the will, not cause it. The motion of the will is a physical act; if, then, the physical act be from the will, and God only the moral cause, the will will be the greater sharer in the work, for moral causes are in vain without a physical effect in those things they work morally upon: as all the reasoning of one man with another will be to little purpose, if there be not a physical motion of the will of that person to comply with the other's reasonings. If, therefore, the reasoning part be only from God, and physical motion from man, the most debauched wretch, under the preaching of the gospel, is as much beholden to God as the highest believer, who had both the same suasions and exhortations; for though the suasion was from God, the persuasion was from their own wills. God only made the revelation, and was afterwards a spectator, not an actor.

(5.) Information. We may draw a conclusion hence whereby to judge of the truth of doctrines. Man cannot renew himself. Whatsoever doctrine does depress and humble man and advance the glory of God, is true, it answers the main design of the gospel, which all centres in this, that man is to be laid low, and God to be exalted as the chief cause. It pulls man from his own bottom, and transfers all the glory man would challenge into the hands of God; it lays man in the dust at God's footstool. That doctrine which crosses the main design of the gospel, and encourages pride in man, is not a spark from heaven: 'No flesh must glory in God's presence,' [1 Cor. i. 29](#). The doctrine of justification by works is thrown down by the apostle with this very argument as a thunderbolt: [Rom. iii. 27](#), 'Where is boasting then? it is excluded by faith;' that is, by the doctrine of the gospel, boasting would be introduced by ascribing regeneration to nature as much as it is excluded by denying

justification by works; the doctrine of the gospel would contradict itself, to usher in boasting with one hand whilst it thrust it out with the other. Our Saviour gave this rule long ago, that the glorifying God is the evidence of truth in persons: 'He that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true,' [John vii. 18](#). By the same reason also in things and doctrines, and indeed, Christ speaks it in relation to his doctrine, as appears, verse 16, 17. All truth gives God the pre-eminence in all gracious works; the first creation, the progress and top-stone, are the works of this great Bezaliel, this mighty artificer, both the first draught and the last line. To confound nature and grace together, is to join the creature in communion with God, and make them co-heirs in the glory which is only due to the only wise and almighty Creator.

Use 2 is for exhortation. 1. To the regenerate. If this doctrine be true,

1. Then ascribe nothing to flesh. (1.) Not to yourselves. No more praise is due to us than to gold for being melted by the fire and wrought by the workman into a vessel of honour; it is due to the skill of the artificer, not to the vessel itself. When the reparation of human nature was to be wrought by the gospel, when the crooked should be made straight, and the rough places plain, then should flesh be as grass, when the Spirit of the Lord should blow upon it; yea, the people, those that are God's peculiar ones, by reason of privileges, are grass, [Isa. xl. 4, 6, 7](#), they should be nothing in themselves, that God might be all in all: the Spirit of God blows upon all their self-confidences. If God be the God of all grace, what share have our wills in it then? He calls, he opens the heart, he strengthens, he perfects; all the grace we have is his 'treasure,' [1 Peter v. 10](#). He first delivers from Egypt; preserves in the desert; conducts to a footing in Canaan. Grace triumphs in the whole work, from Dan to Beersheba, from the beginning of the work to the end. What glory can belong to us? We will, it is true, but God gives that will; we work, but God bestows and stands by that power to work; what have we then to do with the praise? It is 'in his light we see light,' [Ps. xxxvi. 9](#). The rays whereby we have a glimpse of him are not darted from us to him, but from him to us. The light in the air springs not from itself, but from some other body enlightening it; how can any good be ascribed to us, where there is nothing but insufficiency and defect? It is to belie the Lord, to entitle a work of omnipotence to so infirm a cause, it is worse than the pharisee, who, in the midst of his boasts of his own moral righteousness, thought a tribute of praise due to God: 'Lord, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,' [Luke xviii. 11](#). Shall we entitle God the author of our beings, and ourselves the creators of our spiritual beings? Is it less to have an elevation of our faculties, and an animation of them by a new virtue, than to have simply the faculties themselves? If the creature be unable of itself to move without a dependence on God in way of common providence, much more unable is it to move without dependence on God in a way of supernatural vitality. The glory of the act is as little due to man as the glory of the first habit.

Now, 1, review yourselves, consider what you were before regeneration, what after it; and then, how can you ascribe anything to yourselves?

(1.) What you were before regeneration. Was not sin as deeply rooted in you as any other, which made you as incapable to raise yourselves as the most wicked man in the world? Were you not prisoners in chains, captives under locks and bolts, when grace first set up its standard for your recovery? How thick was the darkness of your minds? how stout the perversity of your wills? how impetuous the violence of your sinful affections? Did they not all conspire together to make as stout a resistance against the work of the gospel as any others? Can you then say, that because God saw you more inclinable to grace than another, that he drew you? You were created; did you bring clay enough to compose the least particle of flesh about you? You are new created; what part of the new man was formed by your direction? Did you bring grace enough of yourselves to form one holy thought, or send out one holy desire? Did your own will single you out of that multitude of degenerate men of better natures than yours, left still in their own nothingness? Was it nothing but your own will that planted you in the nursery of the invisible church, that made you capable of a divine union? Were not other men's reasons as strong as yours? the means they enjoyed greater? their moral disposition sweeter? What was the reason their wills did not bend themselves as well as yours? What is the reason they did not hold out their hands to catch this all-necessary grace? Did this noble birth cost none any pains but yourselves? Was this goodly fabric reared by your own wills? Look on it; methinks it is a piece too comely and noble for human skill.

(2.) What are you since your regeneration? What, do you find no rebellion of the law in your members against the law of the mind? Are there not powerful allurements of the flesh? Are your thoughts always flying up to God, and hovering about him? Are you always nimble in your praise of him? or not rather lifeless many times under the breathings of the Spirit? Why are you thus? Did you first by your own force begin this noble conquest of sin? And can you not by the same power make a better progress? Did you breathe a life into yourselves when you had not a spark, and can you not blow up this spark into a greater liveliness? Surely then this work was not at first the birth of your own wills. Do you not yet find some scale and thick matter upon your understandings that you cannot pick off? some darkness in your minds, as there is some in the air after it is enlightened? Are there not obstructions in your wills? no shackles upon the executive power? Can you not remove that darkness with that great light you have? nor unlock those fetters by the strength of your habitual grace? Can then the first powerful entrance of it, the fall of the first scale from the understanding, be judged to be the work of your own hands? or the first teeming of your wills with grace to be the effect of your power? View yourselves well in both states, and you will find no ground whereon to build so much injustice towards God, and pride in yourselves, but must needs acknowledge that God and not yourselves have wrought all your works in you, [Isa. xxvi. 12](#), not only your temporal advantages, which the church there means, but your spiritual, and much more spiritual than temporal.

To stave off any ascribing to yourselves, consider,

[2.] He that ascribes it to his own will has great reason to question whether he be regenerate or no. He may well doubt whether he understands or feels what it is, since those in Scripture who have been most experimented in it, and therefore are the most competent judges, have most highly magnified the grace of God, and most deeply vilified themselves; they have given the glory of it so entirely to God that they have not let a grain of it stick to their own fingers. Thus David often, 'Thou hast quickened me.' The apostle Paul owns his effectual call to be owing to the 'grace of God,' [Gal. i. 15](#), and to an abundant 'grace in Christ,' [1 Tim. i. 14](#); he was a persecutor, but his faith and love was from the abundance of the grace of God, and that in Christ too, not from any thing in nature. Peter is not behind him in the admiration of it: [1 Peter i. 8](#), 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again.' And it is that the church in the times of the gospel prophesied of: [Ps. c. 8](#), 'It is he that has made us, not we ourselves;' made us his people, as it follows, 'We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture,' 'not we ourselves.' Whenever the naughtiness of their hearts has been ready to launch out to self-praise, they have turned the tide quickly to the grace of God. When Paul had owned grace as the cause of his spiritual being, [1 Cor. xv. 10](#), and began to speak of his labouring more abundantly than they, he flies back in haste, as one that had gone beyond his line, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;' another, 'Yet not I;' [Gal. ii. 20](#), 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.' There is no mention of any in Scripture that ever in this case did sacrifice to their own net.

[3.] If a man be regenerate, such a boasting of himself is very dangerous. Though it may not rifle you of the new nature, yet by the just judgment of God, it may cloud the comfort of it. If such a man be renewed, this pride is but a prologue of some dark veil to be drawn between him and the light of God's countenance, between him and the sight of his own grace. A swelling up in pride presages a sinking down in desertion. If God be not owned by you to be the God of all grace in you, he will not own himself to be the God of all comfort to you. Grace follows humility, and some shrewd shock attends spiritual pride, it is such an idolatrous robbing God of his glory (whereof he is most jealous), and giving it to another, that he will not let it pass without a remark. The clouding of your grace will be the fruit of the smothering of his glory. For since the main intendment of the gospel is to humble, God will humble you if any grace be in you. If the Spirit of grace has breathed upon your souls to renew you, he will blow upon your grass to consume it, [Isa. xl. 7](#), he will pull down those proud thoughts and strong holds, and cause your vain confidences to wither and come to nothing. Ascribe it not therefore to yourselves; be not so presumptuous, as, while you allow God to be the author of the being and motion of a little fly, to cry up your own wills as the chief cause of grace, a work more excellent than the material world.

2. Ascribe nothing to instruments, either men or means. It is not of the will of man, not another's will. Without the efficacious working of the Spirit, the gospel itself is but as a dead letter, the Spirit only quickens it. It is not outward teaching and blowing which of itself will kindle these sparks; an instrument cannot act without the strength of an agent to manage it; the chisel forms the stone into a statue, but according to the skill and strength of the artifices moving it. It is not the breath of man, and a few words out of his mouth, can produce so great a work as the new creation; this might be a reason why God chose so weak an instrument as man to preach the gospel, to evidence that the great work was not from the weakness of man but the power of God.

Exhortation 2. Let us be humbled under our own natural impotence and inability, and keep up this humiliation. There is danger of the pharisee's pride climbing up into the heart, even after regeneration. Renewed men have instructions to humility above other men; their sin may strike them low, because it is the growth of their own nature; their grace may keep them low, because it is no plant of their own setting; sin, because it is originally theirs; grace, because it is originally none of theirs; it is no beam of their own understanding, no stream from the fountain of their own will. If we think believingly and fruitfully of Christ at any time, we cannot but think of our own weakness, nothing in him but minds us of it; our weakness to obey the law was the cause of his coming; our weakness to satisfy God was the cause of his dying; our inability to repair and support ourselves was the cause of his fullness. His death minds us of our impotence to redeem ourselves, his grace minds us of our impotence to renew ourselves. The more we grow up in the new birth, the more deeply sensible shall we be of our impotence. Oh, let this text be written in our hearts, 'Not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.'

3. Resolve nothing in your own strength. The power to believe and be renewed is a power 'given,' not inbred, [Philip. i. 29](#); our strength is deposited, not in the cracked cabinet of our own wills, but in the treasures of Christ. Our purposes are weak without grace to strengthen them, our resolutions vanishing without grace to establish them. If we should be left to the sails of our own faculties, without the breath of the Spirit to fill them, we should lie wind-bound. The will can never in this life be so firm but the allurements of the great tempter will make inroads upon us and overset us, without the special grace of God to establish and strengthen us. As we are not to do anything for our own glory, so we are not to do anything in our own strength. As we must not be our own end, so we must not be our own principle; the power the best have is but derived, the stream must know it is but a stream still. The actual exercise of Paul's ability grew from strength in another hand, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me,' [Philip. in. 14](#); all things by him, nothing by himself. When the Israelites went out with God, no sons of Anak, no walls of Jericho, nor chariots of iron could stand before them. When they trusted in themselves, nothing could be resisted by them. The devil was certainly none of the lowest rank of angels; he had a great clearness

of gifts, yet he falls for cleaving to his own will and strength, not to the grace of God. And Adam, in depending upon himself, lost himself and his posterity. For us to undertake the government of ourselves is like a ship without a pilot, to be dashed soon against a rock. To lean on our own wisdom and will, is to lean on broken reeds, deceitful supports; self-confidence is the worm of grace, conceit of a spiritual fullness in ourselves is the way to an emptiness of spiritual comfort. Self-will and self-wisdom are the great idols of the soul, and some little images of them are in the hearts of the best men, which they are ready sometimes to fall down before and worship; they would oppose temptations themselves, do duties themselves by the strength of habitual grace, without regard to the strength of God, the great support of it.

4. Therefore live dependently upon God. Do you not find how apt you are to stagger at every temptation; how weak your wills are to good; how easily your purposes are broken, the thoughts of God few and distracted, your motions heavy in divine ways? Is there not, then, need of a constant looking unto God, as they did upon the brazen serpent, for the healing of our natures, while the wound remains imperfectly cured? All bodies on the earth, though they have a principle of motion in themselves, yet dependently upon the heavenly bodies. If the motions of the heavens should cease, that all motions in the earth would cease too is the opinion of philosophers. Without dependence on the grace of God and fullness of Christ, we sink into weakness and impotency, as a beam expires into duskiness upon the clouding of the sun. It is God only can be a 'dew to Israel,' [Hosea xiv. 5](#). Think not of bringing forth the after-fruits of grace without his influence, no more than you could plant in yourselves the first root of grace without his power: the same breath of the Spirit must blow the fire up as well as kindle it. As by our own wills we should never turn to God, so without the continuance of efficacious grace we should quickly start from God. 'As you have received Christ, so walk in him,' [Col. ii. 6](#). You received him by faith, walk in him by faith. This is the reason of the different thrivings of one Christian above another, under the same means. One endeavours to act upon his own bottom; the other clings to the vine. Christ knew the things of God by lying in the bosom of the Father; we come to know and do the things of God by lying in the bosom of the Son. All natural effects, if taken off from the influence of their own cause, by which they live and increase, lose their power and die. The soul separate from God, by non-exercise of faith, loses its strength, become stiff and inactive. How often do we return to our wonted coldness, bring forth lazy fruits, creep like snails in the ways of God, without the spur of quickening grace! And we want it because we do not seek it; for though we be armed with the whole armour of God, helmet, shield, breastplate, yet prayer and supplication must be added as a mark of our necessary dependence: [Eph. vi. 18](#), 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication.' Then will the Spirit endue us with a fresh vigour, confirm our languishing wills, restrain the flames of natural corruption, and excite the fear and faith of God in the heart.

2. The second branch of the-exhortation, to those yet in a natural condition.

1. Endeavour to be sensible of your natural impotence. Be deeply humbled at the feet of God, strip yourselves (as much as in you lies) of the conceitedness of reason and pride of will. Every man is born with high conceits of himself and his own power; it being a natural evil, should cost us the deeper humiliations. Consider yourselves by nature under the dominion of sin, the demerit of wrath, the curse of the law, the hatred of God, and a feebleness to help yourselves in this wretched condition. View yourselves often in the glass of the law, bring the spiritual word and the carnal heart together, and behold the beauty of the one and deformity of the other; let all the nasty corners of the heart come under the examination of that purity, and then let the carnal mind hang down at the thoughts of your inability to frame yourselves according to a spiritual law. The view of our natural condition cannot work regeneration in us, but it is some kind of preparation towards it. 'The law is a schoolmaster to drive to Christ,' [Gal. iii. 24](#). It works not this grace, but it fires a man out of himself, shows him how much he differs from the holiness of God, and is an occasion for casting about and looking after some remedy, whereby he may be made like to God, and of earnest crying for the showers of grace. Be sensible also of your contrariety to the grace of God, our wilfulness against it is worse than our emptiness of it. God 'will teach the humble his ways,' [Ps. xxv. 9](#). those that are sensible of their own insufficiency to guide themselves.

2. Make use of the power you have. Man (as has been sheen) has some power by those restored relics of nature. There is no plea therefore to lie snorting upon a bed of sluggishness. We must not expect a divine assistance will fly to us from heaven while we play the sluggards. Though God does rouse up some on the sudden, before and previous act of their wills, yet we must not expect God will use the same methods to all. Our own power must be stirred up and exerted as much as may be. To be faithful in a little is the way to be made ruler over much. Though the top of nature cannot merit grace, yet if nature struggles to come to the top it may find an invisible hand helping it up step by step. The damnation of most men will not be for the fault of their first parents, but for the abuse of their own power, the perverseness of their wills, and neglect of what they might have done towards the seeking of God. Though Moses had a promise of victory over Amalek, yet Joshua must fight, and the Israelites stand to their arms. God saves not men in ways encouraging their laziness. 'The sluggard desires and has nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat,' [Prov. viii. 4](#). The sluggard has nothing but lazy wishes, not active endeavours. If it be not worth the having, why do you desire it? If it be worth the desiring, why not worth the seeking?

(1.) Avoid those sins you have power to avoid. Every sin, though never so little, does increase our weakness, as every wound does the distemper of the body. It makes us weigh down towards the centre of sin. Every grain cast into the scale makes it the more unable to rise. As a virtue which is risen to that height that it cannot degenerate into vice is most

worthy of praise, so the vice that possesses the soul so deeply as to incapacitate it to the doing good, being contracted by ourselves, is the more worthy of wrath.

(2.) Use the means appointed by God. Though we are torches which cannot light ourselves, yet we may bring ourselves to the word, which may both melt and kindle us. Though the giving rain and the increasing the fruits of the earth be from God, yet no man ever held ploughing, and sowing, and pruning unnecessary. The work of grace is the work of the Spirit, who is a 'wind which blows where it lists,' [John iii. 8](#). But may we not wait for those gales? May we not spread our sails and watch for the successful breathings? How do you know but whilst you are waiting upon God in an humble posture, God may unlock your hearts, and pour in the treasures of his grace? [Acts x. 44](#), 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' It you will not harden your hearts today, God may soften your hearts today: [Heb. iii. 16](#), 'Today, if you will hear his voice.' These are the times wherein God parleys with the soul, and inclines it to the happy surrender. Though the power is God's, as the water is the fountain's, yet he has appointed the channels of his ordinances through which to convey it: 'Ministers by whom you believed,' [1 Cor. iii. 5](#). The gospel begets instrumentally, God principally [1 Cor. iv. 15](#). God calls by the gospel, [2 Thess. ii. 14](#). As God is the governor of the world, yet it is by instruments and second causes, which he clasps together to bring about his own designs. He that does not use these means may fear that God will never work savingly upon him, for it is an utter refusing any acceptance of this grace, or anything tending to it. This is to be peremptory, never to do ourselves any good, or receive any from God. In despising the means, you despise the goodness of God. As God gave up the heathens to themselves, because they were 'unthankful,' [Rom. i. 21](#), for that light of nature and means which they had, so if we use the means of the gospel with thankfulness to God, God may give himself up to us. But by neglect of them we take the larger strides to destruction, and the same dreadful sentence may be pronounced against us as against them in [Ezek. xxiv. 13](#), 'Because I have purged thee,' that is, offered thee means whereby thou might have been purged, 'and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more; but in thy filthiness thou shalt die.' The using the means afforded by God has a common illumination, and a 'taste of the heavenly gift' attending it, [Heb. vi. 4](#).

[1.] Use the means *fervently*, with as much ardour as you set upon anything of worldly concern; do it with all your might, since the eternal blessedness of your soul depends upon it: [Eccles. ix. 10](#), 'Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might.' Stir up your souls to hear and meditate, as David does to bless: [Ps. ciii. 1, 2](#), 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.' Employ all your faculties in this useful work; bring your hearts as near to the word as you can, screw up your affections to what you meditate upon, check your hearts when they begin to rove. Consider your own particular case in

anything you hear; and let the word be as a delightful picture in the view of your minds continually; let every evangelical object excite your inbred affections.

[2.] Use the means *dependently*. Objective proposals are not useless, because God has ordained them; though they are not always successful, unless God does influence them. The means do not work naturally, as a plaster cures a wound, or a hatchet cleaves wood; nor necessarily, as fire burns; for then they should produce the same effects in all, as fire does in combustible matter; but as God pleases to accompany them with his grace, and edge them with efficacy, they must be used with an eye to God, building with one hand, and wrestling with God with the other. Men speed best in ordinances as they strive in prayer. There are promises to plead before you come to hear: [Exod. xx. 24](#), 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee.' The promise was made to the whole nation of Israel, the visible church, therefore pleadable by every one of them; and fix it upon your hearts, that as the death of Christ only takes away the guilt of sin, so the grace of Christ only takes away the life of sin, and the death of nature.

[3.] Pray *earnestly*. Entreat God to send his grace; beg of him to issue out a divine force, and a quickening power, to enlighten your minds, incline your wills. Lie at his feet, groan, wait till this work be wrought in your soul. How do you know, but while you are looking up to God, God may come down to you? Can a man be wounded, and not cry for plasters? Can he be shipwrecked and not cry out for some vessel to relieve him? Let such a voice frequently issue from you, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Is there no balm for a wounded soul, no hope for a distressed sinner, no city of refuge for one pursued by wrath and vengeance? Do you pray for daily bread? Why do you not for special grace? Are there no rational pleas you can urge? Is there not a fullness of arguments in the word? Why do you not then use those arguments God has put into your hands? Why do you not spread his own word before him? Put him in mind how his thoughts were busy about the work of redemption, and that the regeneration you desire of him was the great end of that, and a thing pleasing to him? Why do you not reason with God, to what purpose he sent his Spirit into the world, but to do this work in the hearts of men which you are now soliciting him for; and that you come not to beg any alms of him, but what he freely offers himself? You may daily read such arguments in the word, where a revelation is made of them; you may daily plead them: if you do not, it is not your *cannot*, but your *will not*. Cry out of the blind eyes you cannot upscale, the iron sinew you cannot bend, the false heart that will not go right, and the fallen nature which cannot reach so high as a holy thought. Surely God will not be deaf to the natural prayers of his rational creatures put up to him with a natural integrity, no more than he is to the cries of animals, to the voice of the lion seeking for his prey, into whose mouth he puts, by his providence, what may satisfy it. God gives the Spirit to them that ask him; not to the idle, lazy, and peevish resister of him and his grace. If you have power to regenerate yourselves, why do you not do it? If you have not, why do you not seek it? Is the way of

heaven shut to you; or rather, do you not shut your own hearts against it? Have you sought it earnestly, and can you say God denies it you? No man can say so; there is a promise for it: [James iv. 8](#), 'Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you;' he speaks it to sinners, as it follows, 'Cleanse your hands, you sinners.' You can pray for other mercies, why not principally for this particular determination of your wills to God, above all other things? Lord, give me to will and to do. Never leave off praying till God has crowned your petitions with success; and be encouraged to seek to him, whose great business in the world was to destroy the works of the devil, whose principal work was the spiritual death of man. If you have such earnest desires in your souls, that you would rather have it than the whole world, and esteem it above all worldly wealth or honours, be of good comfort, some of the rubbish of nature is removed; the steams of such desires shall be welcome to God, and the Spirit's commission shall be renewed to breathe further upon your souls. Desire as vehement as hunger and thirst shall be satisfied, if our blessed Saviour's promise be true, who never deceived any, or broke his word: [Mat. v. 6](#), 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' A fullness attends a sense of emptiness, accompanied with hungering desires. But I am afraid few people put up their petitions to God for it; that I may say, as Daniel of his nation, 'all this evil' of unrighteousness and sin is 'come upon us' by our depraved natures; 'yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth,' [Dan. ix. 13](#).

[4.] Nourish every motion and desire you find in your hearts towards it. Have you not sometimes motions to go to the throne of grace, and beg renewing grace of God? Do you not find such tugs and pulls in your consciences? Is there not something within you spurs you on? Kick not against it, nor resist it, no, nor smother any spark of an honest desire in your hearts; be constant observers of lessons, your natural consciences, or whatever any other principle set you. Natural notions are not so blotted, but they remain legible; would men be more inward with themselves, than abroad with the objects of sense, which draw their minds from pondering that decalogue written in their souls. There is not the most wicked man under the gospel, but has sometimes more bright irradiations in his conscience than at other times, but they are damped by a noisome sensuality; he has some velleities and heavings, some strugglings against the solicitations of unrighteousness, some assents upon the presenting of virtue; for as grace is not always so powerful in a good man as to stifle temptation, so neither is corruption so powerful in a wicked man as always to beat back those motions to good which rise up in his soul, whether he will or no. As the law of the mind is not always so sovereign in a gracious man, but that it is affronted by the law of the members, so neither is the law of the members so absolute in a wicked man, but that it is somewhat checked by the law of nature in the mind. Are there not upon hearing the word, or reflecting upon yourselves, some wishings, some inward velleities which partake of reason, and the nature of that faculty which represents the necessity of it to you? As there

is some kind of weak knowledge left in us since the fall, there is also something of a weak desire. Cannot these desires be improved and represented to God? Why is not the grace of God fulfilled in you? Because you persevere not in these desires, you quench the sparks of the Spirit, and willingly give admission to Satan to chase them out. Shut not your eyes then against any light, either without or within you, which may provoke God to withdraw this grace from you. How do you know but, upon using the means, praying earnestly, observing inward motions, God may give you an actual regeneration? The neglect of these is a just reason for God to refuse you any further gift; and may take off all things which you may think to bring against him in your own defence. The use of them has been beneficial to many, and no example can ever be brought, that God has condemned any that conscientiously used the means of salvation. Therefore I say again, if any man use the means, pray earnestly for this grace, observe the motions of the Spirit in him, he will not want a superadded grace from an infinitely good, tender, and merciful God.

End of part 1 of *A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration.*

A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

Part 2

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John 1:13.

Two doctrines were raised from these words.

1. That man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself.

This I have despatched, and now proceed to the

2nd Doct. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

It is subjectively in the creature, efficiently from God. Ezekiel's dry bones met not together of their own accord, [Ezek. xxxvii. 5, 6](#), or by chance, but were gathered by God, and inspired with life; and not only the last act of life, but the whole formation of them in every part, he does particularly own as the act of his own power. And doing every part of it by degrees, they should know, by that admirable work upon them, that he was God: 'I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin; and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.' This work does as much discover the glory of his deity, and speaks him God in a more illustrious manner than the creation of the world. We know him to be the Lord Jehovah by his creation of the world; but a clearer knowledge of him in his power is added by his regeneration of the soul. The sinews, flesh, skin, all the preparations to grace, are from God, as all the preparations of that mass of clay for the breath of life in Adam were from the power of God, as well as the living soul itself. Most do understand it of the recovery of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon; but certainly it has a higher import, and respects the time of the gospel, and the renewing of life in the soul of all the Israel of God. (1.) Because the prophecy extends further than the two tribes captivated in Babylon; for, verse 11, the bones are said to be 'the whole house of Israel,' who despaired of ever seeing and good, complaining that their bones were dried: ver. 11, 'Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.' Which could not be rationally the complaint of the Jews, who had a promise that, after seventy years' captivity, they should return, and therefore their case was not so desperate. (2.) Because, verse 14, he speaks of 'putting his Spirit into them;' meaning thereby that work he had spoken of in the former chapter, [Ezek. xxxvi. 7](#), which certainly, being a covenant of grace, respected the times of the gospel. If it be said that it is meant of forming the church, it must also be meant of forming every member of it, since the least member of Adam was formed by God, as well as the whole body. Certainly, if renewed men, after some great falls, having still the root of habitual grace in them, cry to God, out of a sense of their own insufficiency, for the creating a clean heart, as David does, [Ps. li. 10](#), 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;' if he then, who had this root remaining, and had some sparks which

presently were blown up upon Nathan's speech to him, cries out for a new creation, what need has he then of an almighty breath who has not any warm ashes of grace or any one string of a spiritual root in his soul! Whatsoever, therefore, is holy, good, and spiritual in us, we owe to the new-creating grace of God. All graces are his "charismata", his free donatives, over and above his common largeness to nature, a present from his infinite liberality.

I shall show,

- I. That God is the efficient.
- II. That it is necessary he should be so.
- III. From what principles in God it flows.
- IV. How God does it.
- V. The use of it.

I. That God is the efficient.

(1.) In the first promise, [Gen. iii. 15](#), 'I will put enmity,' &c. In which promise is included the whole work of redemption, and new creating man under another head, with another nature, which should not comply with the designs of Satan, or gratify the great enemy of God and mankind by unravelling the work of God, and subjecting himself to misery. It was necessary to our happiness that the league between Stan and us should be broken, that we should turn to God, hate the works of the devil, and join with the interest which Satan endeavoured to overthrow. And God promises that he would do it; he challenges it as his own work: 'I will put enmity;' he leaves it not to men or angels to begin hostility. Every one, therefore, that is at a true variance with Satan is 'God's workmanship, created in Christ,' by a second creation, as well as he was created to a natural life in Adam by the first creation, and 'created to good works, that he may walk in them', [Eph. ii. 10](#). That is, is fashioned by God to walk in ways contrary to those of Satan, which is the greatest enmity we can express to the devil, who envied God a service from the holiness of Adam's nature. And Satan having made that conquest, and gained man to be his friend, it is not easy to conceive how any lower power could unfasten this knot, and set them at variance, since the devil had both wit enough to humour man and strength enough to keep him.

(2.) In the times of the gospel. No less than seven times *I will* he does affix to his promise of the covenant, as has been observed before, [Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27](#). What seed was left to keep up the name of God among the Jews was of his begetting: [Rom. ix. 29](#), 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed,' cited out of [Isa. i. 9](#). Their standing was not their act, but God's: and [1 Kings xix. 18](#), 'I have left me seven thousand, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal.' Others were left to themselves; these were signally wrought upon by his grace. Others are but instruments; God is the principal agent in all the seed of the church scattered in the whole earth: [Hosea ii. 23](#), 'I will sow her to me in the earth,' alluding to the name Jezreel, which signifies the seed of God. If ever the sons of Japheth 'dwell in the tents of Shem,' it must be by God's 'persuasion,' [Gen. ix. 27](#). The word rendered *enlarge* signifies to allure.

The Spirit of grace is of God's effusion, [Zech. xii. 10](#); it is God's pouring out a Spirit of grace on them before their looking up to God. (Where, by the way, observe a signal testimony of the deity of Christ; 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;' he that pours upon them the Spirit of grace is he whom they pierced, which was the Lord Jehovah, verse 8; for where in your Bibles Lord is written in great letters, the Hebrew word there is *Jehovah*; the highest name of God is here attributed to Christ.) And even in the last times he will still be the only agent in it. When God speaks of the Jews' dispersion, under which they are at this day, he owns this work upon their hearts at last to be an act of his own power and of covenant mercy: [Deut. xxx. 6](#), 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart,' &c., which some of the Jews understand of the time of the Messiah. God will challenge this work as his own right to the end of the world.

2. Christ appropriates it to God, and acknowledges it to depend only upon his will. Had any other cause been in conjunction with God, our Saviour would not have deprived it of its due praise, nor with so much thankfulness and amazement admired the gracious pleasure of his Father as he did,—[Mat. xi. 25](#), 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,'—at that time, after he had been discoursing of the judgments upon them for their refusal of the gospel, worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. It was God's pleasure not to reveal it to them, and God's justice to punish them for refusal, because they wilfully refused it. The outward teaching was to all in the ministry of Christ, the inward revelation only to few according to the good pleasure of God. Christ was the outward teacher, but God the inward inspirer. That others are not renewed by him is not because he cannot, for he is Lord of heaven and earth, but because he will renew some and not others. Our Saviour refers it here only to the good pleasure of God; he had erred much in ascribing it to God, if he had had the assistance of any other cause. Why this part of the clay he had created was formed into the body of Adam and not another, had no other cause but his pleasure; why this part of corrupted Adam is formed into a temple, a divine image, and not another, can be ascribed to no other but the same cause. He that formed Adam in the earthly paradise, forms every believer in the church, the spiritual paradise, and neither has a co-worker nor motive without himself.

3. The Scripture everywhere appropriates it to God. They are therefore called his saints, [Ps. xxxiv. 9](#), as being sanctified by him as well as belonging to him, 'his people,' 'the branch of his planting,' 'the work of his hands,' peculiarly his, as being created for his glory, 'that I may be glorified,' [Isa. lx. 21](#). Their fitness by grace for glory is the work of his hands. The vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, not by God, but by themselves, [Rom. ix. 22](#). But the vessels of mercy are prepared by him, ver. 23, 'He had before prepared unto glory.' Adam lost himself, but whosoever of his posterity are recovered are 'wrought by God for glory,' [1](#)

[1 Cor. v. 5](#). It is observable that the apostle ascribes this in the whole frame of it to God: [1 Cor. i. 30](#), 'But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness,' &c., because he would remove all cause of boasting in the creature. He did not only set forth Christ at first as a principle of righteousness, and redemption, and sanctification, but engrafted in him, whosoever is in him, for the enjoyment of those privileges, and made him not only in general to the world, but to *us*, in the particular application, a principle of sanctification as well as righteousness. Union with Christ, engrafting in him, new creation, putting into another state, are all purely the work of God. He has no sharer in it. As Christ trod the winepress alone in the work of redemption, so God engrafts men alone into this vine. As Christ was the sole worker of redemption, so is God the sole worker of regeneration. In him we are created, but solely by God's skill; Christ the vine, and believers the branches, the one planted and the other engrafted by the same husbandman, [John xv. 1, 2](#); he only planted and dressed Christ for us, he only plants and dresses us in Christ. It is 'by his own will,' not any other, that 'he begot us,' [James i. 18](#). 'Of his own will,' his own good pleasure was the motive, his own strength the efficient. Hence he is called 'the Father of spirits,' [Heb. xii. 9](#), not so much (as some interpret it, and that most probably) as he is the Father of souls by creation, as by regeneration, which adds a greater strength to the apostle's argument for submission to him and patience under his strokes. He keeps in his own hand the keys of the heart, no less than the key of the womb, which was always acknowledged to be in the hands of God. It is with this prerogative of God that Jacob silences Rachel, when she so impatiently cried out for children, as if she had a resolution to kill herself if she had them not, with this, 'Am I in God's stead?' [Gen. xxx. 1, 2](#). He only opens the womb of the soul as well as that of the body, impregnates it with grace, and brings forth the fruit of holy actions, as Philo in his allegory descants upon the place. The Jews perhaps meant no less in that saying in their Cabala, Abraham had not had Isaac if a letter of the name of God had not been added to his name; the power of God, a letter of his name, must go to regeneration. It is appropriated to none but God in Scripture: to the whole Trinity, without the conjunction of any creature, to the Father as the author, therefore called 'Our Father;' to Christ, as the pattern; to the Spirit, as the inspirer of that grace whereby we are made the sons of God. The very heathen have acknowledged this, some philosophers have affirmed, that the great virtue, wherein they placed the happiness of man, could not be had but by the favour of God, and all thought their heroes to be born of their gods.

And the Scripture affirms that,

(1.) All preparations to this work, as well as the work itself, are of God. The removing indispositions, and the putting in good inclinations, is the work of the same hand; the taking away the heart of stone, as well as the giving a heart of flesh. He removes the rubbish as well as rears the building; razes out the old stamp and imprints a new; destroys sin, which is called the old man, and restores the new by the quickening of the Spirit. The preparations

of the dust of the ground to become a human body, had the same author as the divine soul wherewith he was inspired.

(2.) All the parts of the new creature are of God. Faith, which is the principal part of it, is 'the faith of the operation of God,' [Col. ii. 12](#); not but that love and other graces are wrought by God, but in this grace, which is a constitutive part of the new creature, God comes in with a greater irradiation upon the soul, because it has not one fragment or point in nature to stand upon, carnal reason and mere moral righteousness being enemies to it, whereas all other graces are but the rectifying the passions, and setting them upon right objects. Yet all these, too, own him as the author. Our knowledge of God is a light growing from his knowledge of us; 'we know God' because we 'are known of him.' [Gal. iv. 9](#). The elective act of our wills is but a fruit of his choice of us: [John xv. 16](#), 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;' our willing of him is a birth of his willing us, our love a spark kindled by his love to us. God first calls us *my people*, before any of us call him *my God*, [Hosea ii. 23](#). The moon shines not upon the sun till it be first illuminated by it. God first shines upon us before we can reflect upon him; he calls us before we can speak to him in his own dialect; our coming is an effect of his drawing, and our power of coming an effect of his quickening. Every member in Adam was a fruit of his power, as well as the whole body; every line drawn in the new creature is done by his pencil as well as the whole frame.

(3.) The acts of the new creature. God does not only give us the habit of faith, but the act of faith: [Philip. i. 29](#), 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake.' By believing is meant the act of believing, as by suffering is meant not only the power of suffering, but actual suffering; as the fruits upon the trees at the first creation were created as well as the tree which had a power to bear. The very attention of Lydia to the gospel preached by Paul was wrought by God, as well as the opening of her heart, [Acts xvi. 14](#). Our walking in his statutes is a fruit of his grace, as well as the putting in his Spirit to enable us thereunto. The very act of motion is made by the head and heart, if there be a failing of spirits there, if any obstruction that they cannot reach the indigent part, the motion ceases. David acknowledged God his continual strength in his holy pursuits, 'My soul follows hard after thee,' [Ps. lxxiii. 8](#). But what was the cause? 'Thy right hand upholds me.' His life and power issued out from the right hand of God. The graces of God's people stand in need of the irradiations of God, like the *Urim* and *Thummim*, before any counsel could be given by them.

(4.) The continuance both of the power and acts are from God. Habitual grace is called the 'fear of the Lord' put into the soul; the continuance of it is by his constant sustentation, it is that we may not depart from him [Jer. xxxii. 40](#), 'from upon him,' from leaning upon him, or believing in him, as the word "me'alaw" imports. If that fear put in did once depart from us, we should no longer cleave to God; we stick to him only because he ties us to himself, and cannot be continually with him unless he 'holds us by his right hand,' [Ps. lxxiii.](#)

23. The grace that is wrought, as well as the gospel which instrumentally wrought it, is 'kept by the Holy Ghost,' [2 Tim. i. 14](#); he begins every good work, and he performs it. He was the sole active cause in the creation of the faculties, and the principal cause in preserving them; he is the sole cause of the elevation of the faculties, and the preservation of them in that elevated state. As the virtue of the loadstone is not only the cause of the first attraction of the steel, but of its constant adhesion, therefore it is said: [1 Cor. i. 21](#), that 'God does establish us,' not has done, to note the continual influence of his grace upon us. It was the dropping of the two olive trees that constantly fed the lamps in the candlesticks, [Zech. iv. 2, 8](#). Take this new birth in all the denominations of it, it is altogether ascribed to God. As it is a call out of the world, God is the herald, [2 Tim. i. 9](#); as it is a creation, God is the creator [Eph. ii. 10](#); as it is a resurrection, God is the quickener, [Eph. ii. 5](#); as it is a new birth, God is the beggetter, [1 Peter i. 3](#); as it is a new heart, God is the framer, [Ezek. xxxvi. 26](#); as it is a law in the heart, God is the penman, [Jer. xxxi. 33](#); as it is a translation out of Satan's kingdom, and making us denizens of the kingdom of Christ, God is the translator, [Col. i. 13](#); as it is a coming to Christ, God is the drawer, [John vi. 44](#); as it is a turning to God, God is the attracter.

II. The second thing; it is necessary God should be the efficient of regeneration. He is, or none.

In regard of God.

1. As he is the first cause of all things. He is the creator of the lowest worm, and the highest angel; the glimmering perfections of the least fly, as well as the more glittering eminencies of the angelical nature, are distinct beams from that fountain of light and power. Shall not he then be the cause of the divine motions of the will, as well as of the natural motions of the creatures? Every perfection in a rational creature, or any other, supposes that perfection to be somewhere essentially; every impression supposes a stamp that made it, every stream a fountain from whence it sprang, every beam a sun, or some lucid body from whence it darts. Whence should this gracious work then be derived? Not from nature, which is contrary to it; not from Satan, who is destroyed by it. It must be then from God, since it must have some stable and perfect cause. He who was the cause of all the grace in the head is also the cause of all the grace in the members. The same sun that enlightens the heavens enlightens the earth. The grace that Christ had was 'the gift of God,' [John iii. 34](#), much more must it be his gift to us, though we had souls as capacious as his. If the head derived not his grace to himself, the members cannot; for Christ being a creature, in regard of his humanity, must necessarily be dependent; for to make any creature independent upon God is to advance it above the degree of a creature-state, and make it God's fellow, yea, to have a godhead in itself, as being the first principle of its own being. To say any creature can move to God, without being moved by God, or live without his influence, is to make the creature independent on God in its operations; and if it be independent in its operations, it would be so consequently in its essence, besides, if it be not created by him, it may subsist without him, it

stands in no need of his quickening. The believers in Scripture were very unadvised then to pray to God for his quickening and establishing grace, if he were not the enlivener and author of it. His power works in preservation as well as creation, [John v. 17](#), and whatsoever is dependent on him in preservation is dependent on him in creation and the first framing. And if it does not depend upon him in preservation, it is not his creature, but it is a god. All creatures have a dependence upon something immediately superior to them. The moon receives her light and chief beauty from the sun, which else would be but a dusky body; the earth its influence from the heavens. In artificial things the little wheels in a watch depend upon the greater, that upon the string (spring?), that in its motion upon the hand that winds it up. The higher any creature is, the more immediately it depends upon God in its production; the waters brought forth the fish, but God himself formed man.

2. As he is the promiser of it. The divine promise is only fulfilled by a divine operation, it is necessary then for the honour of his truth to be the performer of it. All his promises concerning this matter run in that strain, I will: [Hosea ii. 19](#), 'I will betroth thee to me for ever; I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving-kindness, and in mercy: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord.' The Lord promises by this of knowing him all gracious works upon the soul, regeneration, faith, &c., for this knowledge is an effect of the covenant which God promises in that great copy of it: [Jer. xxxi. 34](#), 'They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.' It is not a simple abstracted knowledge, for so the devils know God, and Christ crucified, but such a knowledge that implies faith and love, and a new frame of soul. It is necessary his power should make good what his goodness has promised. It was not necessary any word of promise should go out of his mouth, there was no engagement upon God to do it, but it is necessary this promise should be performed; though he were free before he promised, yet he is not free after he has promised, because his truth engages him to perform it, and perform it as his own act, as much as his mercy moved him to promise it as his own act. As mercy made it, so his mercy is as pressing for the performance, and there comes in a superadded obligation from that of his truth over and above his mercy, to perform it in the same manner he promised it, and in all the circumstances of it. So that, supposing (which cannot be supposed) that his mercy should repent of making it, he would not be true if he did not perform it; besides, it consists not with his truth not to perform that by himself which he has promised by himself, nor with his wisdom to leave that to an uncertain cause at the best, and, further, a cause utterly unable (as every creature is) to produce that which he had promised to do with his own hand, as the cleansing the soul, pouring clean water upon it, pouring out a spirit of grace, writing the law in the heart, which imply his own act principally in this affair, in concurrence with the means he has ordained to that end. The performance of God's promise is as infallible as the cause that made the promise. No power can perform that for another which he promises himself to do; for the thing itself may be done by another, yet

not being done by the party promising to do it, it is not truly done, and in conformity to the promise made. If it were possible then to be done by any but a divine hand, it would not be done truly, because God promises it as his own act, and therefore the working it must be his own act in conformity to his truth.

3. As he has the foreknowledge of all things. It is necessary God should foreknow everything future, and that shall come to pass. This is a perfection necessarily belonging to God; and to imagine the contrary is to frame an unworthy notion of God, and infinitely below the great creator and governor of the world. He therefore wills everything, for if he foreknew anything before he willed it in itself, or in its necessary causes, he foreknew nothing. If he did not will it, how can it come to pass? Therefore he did not foreknow that it would come to pass. If he did foreknow it, then he willed it, otherwise his foreknowledge depended upon an uncertain cause, and he might have judged that to come to pass which never might; unless the cause be determined by God, it is merely contingent. He willing therefore a work of grace in such and such persons, did foreknow that it would be wrought, because he did will that it should be, and his working is done by an act of his will: [Rom. viii. 29](#), 'Whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' The foreknowledge of God being stable and infallible, and being in this case a foreknowledge of what makes highly for the glory of all his attributes, can have no dependence upon an uncertain and fallible cause, but upon a cause as stable as his foreknowledge, which is his will, himself. His foreknowledge of this is not a foreknowledge of it in any created cause, but in himself as the cause; because, as it will appear further, no created cause could accomplish it.

In regard of the subject of this new birth.

1 In regard of the subject simply considered, the heart and will of man, none can corks upon it but God, or have any intrinsic influence to cause it to exercise its vital acts. Angels, though of a very vast power, cannot work immediately upon the heart and will of another creature, to incline and change it, by an immediate touch. All that they can do towards any moving the will, is by presenting some external objects, or stirring up the inward sensitive appetite to some passion, as anger, desire; whereby the will is inclined to will something. But the stirring up those natural affections in an unregenerate man, can never incline his will to good; for being the affections of the flesh, they are to be crucified. Angels also may enlighten the understanding, not immediately, but by presenting similitudes of sensible things, and confirming them in the fancy; but to remove one ill habit from the will or incline it to any good, is not in their power. God gave an angel power to purge the prophet's lips with a coal from the altar, [Isa. vi. 6, 7](#), but that was done in a vision, and a symbol or sign only that his uncleanness was removed. A coal could have no virtue in it to purge spiritual pollutions from the spirit of a man. Neither can man change the will; men by allurements or threats may change, or rather suspend the action of another, as a father that threatens to

disinherit his son; or a magistrate that threatens to punish a subject for his debauchery, may cause a change in the actions of such persons; but the heart stands still to the same sinful points, and may be vicious under a fair disguise. He only that made the will, can incline and 'turn it as the rivers of waters; the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord,' [Prov. xxi. 1](#), and so is every man's heart kept in the hands of him that created it, both cabinet and key. No man knows the heart, no, the heart itself knows not everything which is in it. God knows all the wards in the heart, and knows how to move it. If a man could turn the heart of another, it could only be in one or two points; it cannot be conceived how he should alter the whole frame of it, make it quite another thing than it was before. The spirit of man being 'the candle of the Lord,' [Prov. xx. 27](#), not to give light to him, but lighted by him, can only when it is out be re-lighted, and, when it burns dim, be snuffed by the same hand. Or, suppose for the present he could do this, it must be with much pains and labour, many exhortations and wise management of him upon several occasions. But to do this by a word, in a trice, to put a law into the heart in a moment, and give the hidden man of the heart possession of the will, that a man knows not himself how he came to be changed, this whole work bears the mark and stamp of God in the forehead of it. Men may propose arguments to another, and he may understand them if he has a capacity, but no man can ever make another have a capacity who is naturally incapable; it is God only can make the heart capable of understanding, he only can put a new instinct into it, and make it of another bent; it is he that renews the spirit of the mind to enable it to understand what he does propose, and elevates the faculty to apprehend the reason of it.

2. In regard of the subject, extremely ill qualified. Can any question the divinity of the work, when stones are made children to Abraham; when waters of repentance are drawn out of a hard rock, Aaron's dry rod made to bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit, [Num. vii. 8](#), when souls deeply allied to the kingdom of darkness are translated into the kingdom of light? To see habits strengthened by custom, in a consumption, and hearts filled with multitudes of idols in several shapes, casting them out with indignation, and flourishing with new springing graces, it is too great a miracle to be wrought by the hand of any creature. Could anything but the arm of the Lord change the temper of the thief upon the cross, to advance further in the space of an hour in the kingdom of God, than all the apostles had done in the three years' converse with their Master; to confess him, when one of the most eminent of them had denied him; to be more knowing in an instant, than they had been in a long time; and acknowledge his spiritual kingdom, when they even after his resurrection, and just before his ascension, expected a temporal one? [Acts i. 6](#), 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' If a Socrates, or a Cato, or those braver lights among the heathen, were turned to God, the interest of God in the work might upon some seeming ground be questioned; but when the leviathans in sin, drunkards, extortioners, adulterers, men guilty of the greatest contempt of God and the light of nature, in whom lust had kept a peaceable

possession in its empire for many years, are thoroughly changed, who can doubt but that such must indeed be 'washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God'? [1 Cor. vi. 11](#). What can this be but the will of God, since their hearts were so delightfully filled with evil, that they had no room nor love for any holy thought? It is not conceivable that where sin has made such a rout, and cut and slashed all morality in pieces, things should be set in order there, but by a power stronger both than sin and the law, from whence sin derives its strength. It is no less than a divine miracle to renew an habituated sinner.

(3.) In regard of the nature of this new birth. It is a change of nature; a nature where there was as little of spiritual good as there was of being in nothing before the creation. It is a change of stone into flesh; a heart that like a stone has a hardness and settledness of sinful parts, a strong resistance against any instrument, an incorporation of sin and lust with its nature. Where the heart and sin, self and sin, are cordially one and the same, none can change such a nature but the God of all grace, who has all grace to contest with all the power of old Adam. No man can change the nature of the meanest creature in the world; he may tame them, bring them to part with some of their wildness, but he cannot transform them. If no man can transform the lowest creature from one nature to another, much less can any but God transform man into another nature.

This nature is changed in every believer; for it is impossible a man should stand bent to Christ, with his old nature predominant in him, any more than a pebble can be attracted by a loadstone, till it put on the nature of steel. An unrighteous nature cannot act righteously, it must therefore be a God, who is above nature, that can clothe the soul with a new nature, and incline it to God and goodness in its operations. Now to see a lump of vice become a model of virtue; for one that drank in iniquity like water, to change that sinful thirst for another for righteousness; to crucify his darling flesh; to be weary of the poison he loved for the purity he hated; to embrace the gospel terms, which not his passion but his nature abhorred; to change his hating of duty to a free-will offering of it; to make him cease from a loathing the obligations of the law, to a longing to come up to the exactness of it; to count it a burden to have the thoughts at a distance from God, when before it was a burden to have one serious thought fixed on him, speaks a supernatural grace transcendently attractive and powerfully operative. Heavy elements do not ascend against their own nature, unless they be drawn by some superior force. To see a soul neighed down to the earth, to be lifted up to heaven, must point us to a greater than created strength that caused the elevation. These acts are supernatural, and cannot be done by a natural cause; that is, against the order of working in all things, for then the effect, as an effect, would be more noble than its cause.

(4.) In regard of the suddenness of it. Peter and Andrew were called when they thought of nothing but their nets; and Paul changed by a word or two, who before was not only unwilling, but rebellious. Some have gone into a church wolves, and returned lambs. This change comes upon some that never dreamt of it, and has snatched them out of the arms

of hell; upon others who have resisted with all their might any motion that way, and were never greater enemies to any, than to those that would check their sinful pleasures with such admonitions, and yet these have been on the sudden surprised. What ground is there to ascribe any of this, but to a divine work? Many have dropped in unto a sermon with no intention to stay, who have felt God's hook in their souls; have leaped like fish out of their element for a while, and God has caught them in his hand. Have you never heard of some who have gone to make sport with a convincing sermon, or to satisfy lust with unclean glances, who have been made prisoners by grace before their return? This quickness of the soul in coming to Christ was promised to be the fruit of the gospel: [Hosea iii. 5](#), 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness,' when they should 'seek the Lord and David their king.' The word "pachad" signifies not only to fear, but to hasten; both significations may be joined together in the sense of the verse. They shall make haste to fear the Lord and his goodness; surely the power that performs it, is the same with the goodness which promised it. Thus some of the disciples have followed Christ at the first call, and moved readily to him, as iron to the loadstone. For a man that was at a great distance from God, and any affection to him, to be filled on the sudden with a warm love and zeal for him, when nothing of interest could engage him (and sometimes it has been with loss of friends, estate, yea, life too), is as great a discovery of a divine hand, as if a fly were changed into the shape and spirit of a hero; because a spiritual change is more admirable than a natural; and the more by how much the enmity, which was greater, is driven out, for a choice affection to rise up in its stead. The season when such a work is wrought is more significant of a divine force, when men have been in the heat and strength of the pursuit of their sinful pleasures, being then torn out of the embracements of lust with an outstretched arm of God.

(5.) In regard of the excellency of the new birth. Is it reasonable to think that the image of God should be wrought by any other hand than the hand of God, or the divine nature be begotten by anything but the divine Spirit? Since none but man can beget a child in his own likeness, none but God can impart to a soul the divine nature. It is not a change only into the image of God with slight colours, an image drawn as with charcoal; but a glorious image even in the rough draught, which grows up into greater beauty by the addition of brighter colours. 'Changed,' says the apostle, [2 Cor. iii. 18](#), 'into the same image from glory to glory;' glory in the first lineaments as well as glory in the last lines. Is it not too beautiful then, even in the first draught, to be wrought by any pencil but a divine? It is next to the formation of Christ, for it is an initial conformity to him. God is the fountain of all our good things. If 'every good and perfect gift comes from him,' [James i. 17](#), shall not the best of beings be the author of the best of works? If believers are 'light in the Lord,' [Eph. v. 8](#), they are no less light from him and by him who is the 'Father of lights.' It is a 'heavenly calling,' [Heb. iii. 1](#), therefore a heavenly birth. The new heart, the spiritual house wherein God dwells, as well as in the heavens, was not made with a less power and skill than the earth, which is his

footstool, or the heaven, which is his throne. If none be able to make God a footstool, much less a throne, as Jerusalem, the church, is called in the times of the gospel, [Jer. iii. 17](#). (The embroideries and ornaments of the material tabernacle were not made by common art, but by a Bezaleel inspired by the Spirit of God, [Exod. xxxi. 3](#)); can any but himself rear up a temple for the God of heaven to dwell in? [1 Cor. iii. 9](#). Or is the spiritual house of God fit to be made by and but by that God that dwells in it? It was according to the image of God that we were first created; it is according to the image of Christ that we are new created, [Rom. viii. 29](#). Who understands the image of the Son but the Father? Who knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him? The new creature, according to the copy, can only be wrought by him to whom the copy is only visible. It is for the honour of God to allow him to be the framer of all creatures in the rank of beings. Is it not a dishonour to him not to acknowledge him the framer of the new creature in the rank of spiritual beings, since the later is more excellent than the treasures of the earth or the stars of heaven, than body or soul; since the image of God consists not so much in the substance of the soul as in a likeness to God in a holy nature? [Eph. iv. 24](#). To be a righteous regenerate man is more excellent than to be a man; the most glorious effect, then, must have the most glorious cause. One beam of this divine image is too excellent to be the workmanship of any but a divine hand. The very first regenerate thought, to the last dropping off of impurity, is from the same hand. The first drawing us from sin, much more the stripping us of it, is more admirable than the drawing us out of nothing.

(6.) The end of regeneration manifests it to be the work of God. It is to display his goodness. Since this was the end of God in the first creation, it is much more his end in the second. What creature can display God's goodness for him, or give him the glory of it, without first receiving it? Goodness must first be communicated to us, before it can be displayed or reflected by us. The light that is reflected back upon the sun by any earthly body beams first from the sun itself. Both the subject and the end are put together in [Isa. xliii. 20, 21](#), 'The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.' The Gentiles shall have the gospel, who are beasts of the field for wildness, dragons for the poison of their nature, owls for their blindness and darkness. The waters of the gospel shall flow to them to give drink to their souls. This people have I formed for myself. Even beasts, dragons, owls, if formed for himself, they could not be formed but by himself, who only understands what is fit for his own praise. How can such incapable subjects be formed for such high ends, without a supernatural power? So in [Isa. lx. 21](#), 'The branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' Planted by God, that God might be glorified by them. As God only is the proper judge of what may glorify him, so he is the sole author of what is fitted to glorify him. Nothing lower than the goodness of God can instil into us such a goodness as to be made meet to praise, serve, and

love him; such a holiness as may fit us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and enjoy him for ever. As infinite wisdom formed us in Adam, and moulded us with his own hand to be a model of his perfection, so are we no less his workmanship in Christ by a second creation to good works, which, as they are ordained by the will of God, so they are wrought in us by the skill and power of God; what is ordained positively by him and for him is wrought by him. The whole world consists but of two men and their offspring the first man, Adam, the second man, Christ; both they, and all in them, created by God. It is a forming a creature for himself for his own delight. What delight can God take in anything but himself, and what is like himself? Man in his best estate is vanity. As his being is, so are his operations. Vanity, and the operations flowing from thence, are no fit object for the delight of an infinite excellency and wisdom. What pleasure can he have in those things which are not wrought by his own finger? Who knows how to dress anything savoury and pleasant to God but his own grace? Can a finite thing touch an infinite being to enjoy him without the operation of an infinite virtue? Can God delight in anything principally but himself, as he is infinitely good; or in other things but as they come nearest to that goodness? Whatsoever has a resemblance to a superior being must be brought forth into that likeness by something superior to itself.

Now since the ends of this work are so high as to fit us for his praise, his delight, and a fruition of him; since it is to bring the interest of God into the soul, set him up highest in the heart who before was trampled under our feet, enthrone him as king in the soul, cause us to oppose all that opposes him, cherish everything that is agreeable to him, this must be his work or the work of none.

(7.) The weakness of the means manifests it to be the work of God. How could it be possible that such weak means, that were used at the first plantation of the gospel, should have that transcendent success in the hearts of men without a divine power? That a doctrine attended with the cross, resisted by devils with all their subtilty, by the flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries, the wise with all their craft, the mighty with all their power, should be imprinted upon the hearts of men; a doctrine preached by mean men, without any worldly help, without learning, eloquence, craft, or human prudence, without the force, favour, or friendship of men, should get place in men's hearts without a divine inspiration, cannot well be imagined. If it be said there were miracles attending it, which wrought upon the minds of men, it is true; but what little force they had in our Saviour's time the Scripture informs us, when they were ascribed to Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Though miracles did attend it after the ascension of our Saviour, yet the apostle ascribes not so much to them as the means, as he does to the 'foolishness of preaching,' it was that which was the 'power of God,' [1 Cor. i. 18](#); it was that 'whereto God saved them that believe,' [1 Cor. i. 21](#). But the greatest change that ever was wrought at one time was at the first descent of the Spirit, by a plain discourse of Peter, [Acts ii.](#), extolling a crucified God before those that had lately

taken away his life, those that had seen him die, a doctrine which would find no footing in their reasons, filled with prejudice against him, and had expectations of a temporal kingdom by him. Must not this change be ascribed to a higher hand, which removed their rooted prejudices and vain hopes, and brought so many as three thousand over at once? If there be 'diversities of operations, it is the same God that works all in all,' [1 Cor. xii. 6](#). He conveys this 'treasure in earthen vessels, that the power might appear to be of God, and not of men,' [2 Cor. iv. 7](#). Such weak means as earthen vessels cannot work such miraculous changes. Therefore perhaps it was that the preaching of Christ in his humiliation had so little success attending it, that nothing should be ascribed to the word itself, but to the power of God in it. To evidence that success depended on the good pleasure of God, who would not make his preaching in person so successful as that in his Spirit, which appears by Christ's thanksgiving to his Father for revealing these things to babes, and not to the wise: 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' [Luke x. 21](#). Have you never heard of changes wrought in the spirits of men against their worldly interest, when they have been made the scorn of their friends, and a reproach to their neighbours? Can the weakness of means write a law so deep in the heart, that neither sly allurements nor blustering temptations can raze out; that a law of a day's standing in the heart should be able to mate the powers of hell, the cavils of the flesh, and discouragements from the world, when there are no unanswerable miracles now to seal the gospel, and second the proposals of it with amazement in the minds of men? The weakness of the means, and the greatness of the difficulties, speaks it not only to be the finger but the arm of God, which causes the triumphs of the foolishness of preaching. When the proposal crosses the interest of the flesh, restrains the beloved pleasure, teaches a man the necessity of the contempt of the world, and that men should exchange their pride for humility, the pleasure of sin for a life of holiness; for a man not only to cease to love his vice, but extremely to hate it; to have divine flights, when before he could not have a divine thought; to put off earthly affections for heavenly, and all this by the foolishness of preaching, it is an argument of a divine power, rather than any inherent strength in the means themselves.

(3.) The differences in the changes of men evidence this to be the work of God, and that it is from some power superior to the means which are used. As God puts a difference between men in regard of their understandings, revealing that to one man which he does not to another, so he puts a difference between men in regard of their wills, working upon some and not upon others, working upon some that have known less, and not working upon some that have known more, some embracing it, and others rejecting it. We may see,

[1.] The difference of this change in men under the same means. One is struck at a sermon, when multitudes return unshaken. Why is not the case equal in all, if it were from the power of the word? How successful is Peter's discourse, closely accusing the Jews of the murdering of their Lord and Saviour, which is the occasion of pricking three thousand

hearts? Yet Stephen using the same method, and close application of the same doctrine, [Acts vii. 62](#), had not one convert upon record. While Peter's hearers were pricked in their hearts, these gnashed with their teeth, ver. 54. The corruption of the former was drawn out by the pricking of their souls, the malice of the latter exasperated by the cut of their hearts. What reason can be rendered of so different an event from one and the same means in several hands, but the overruling pleasure of God? The reasons were the same, set off with the same human power; the hearers were many of the same nation, brought up in the reading of the prophets, full of the expectations of a Messiah; they had both reasons and natural desires for happiness, as well as the other, yet the one are turned lambs, and the others worse lions than before; the bloody fury of the one is calmed, and the mad rage of the other is increased. The grace of God wrought powerfully in the one, and lighted not upon the other. Two are grinding at the same mill of ordinances, one is taken and another is left. Man breathes into the ears, and God into what heart he pleases.

[2.] The differences in the changes of men under less means. One is changed by weaker means, another remains in his unregeneracy under means in themselves more powerful and likely; some are wrought upon by whispers, when others are stiff under thunders. The Ninevites by one single sermon from a prophet are moved to repentance; the Capernaïtes, by many admonitions from a greater than all the prophets, seconded with miracles, are not a jot persuaded; some remain refractory under great blasts, while others bend at lighter breathings. One man may be more acute than another, of a more apprehensive reason; yet this man remains obstinate, whilst another becomes pliable. Whence does this difference arise, but from the will of God drawing the one, and reusing the other to the conduct of his own will, since both will acknowledge what they are advised to, to be their interest, to be true in itself, necessary for their good, yet their affections and entertainment are not the same? Some of those Jews who had heard the doctrine of Christ, seen the purity of his life and the power of his miracles, admired his wisdom, yet crucified his person; they expected a Messiah, yet contemned him when he came; when the poor thief who, perhaps, had never seen one miracle, nor heard one sermon of our Saviour, believes in him, acknowledges him to be the Son of God, whom he saw condemned to the same death with himself, and dies a regenerate man under great disadvantages. A figure (says one) of all the elect, who shall only be saved by grace, and a clear testimony of an outstretched arm of grace. Those that our blessed Saviour admonished only as a doctor and teacher were unmoved, none stirred but those he wrought upon as a creator.

[3.] Difference of the success of the same means in different places. How various was the success of the apostles in several parts of their circuits! Paul finds a great door of faith opened at Corinth, and in Macedonia, and his nets empty at Athens; multitudes flocking in at one place, and few at another. He is entertained at Corinth, stoned at Lystra, [Acts xiv. 19](#), in danger of his life at Jerusalem, while the Galatians were so affected with the gospel,

that they could have 'pulled out their eyes' for him. The apostle was the same person in all places; the gospel was the same, and had a like power in itself; men had the same reasons, they were all fragments from the lump of Adam: the difference must be then from the influence of the divine Spirit, who rained down his grace in one place and not in another; on one heart, and not on another; who left darkness in Egypt, while he diffused light in Goshen.

[4.] Difference in the same person. What is the reason that a man believes at one time under the proposal of weak arguments, and not at another under stronger? It is not *ex parte objecti*, for that was more visible and credible in itself, when attended by strong arguments, than when accompanied with weaker. Perhaps God has stricken a man's conscience before, and he has undone that work, shaken off those convictions; he has contended with his maker, and mustered up the power of nature against the alarms of conscience; struggled like a wild bull in a net, and broke it, and blunted those darts which stuck in his soul; he has afterwards been screwed up again, and the arrow shot so deep, that with all his pulling he could not draw it out. What but a divine hand holds it in, in spite of all the former triumphs of nature? How come convictions at last to be fixed upon men, which many a time before did but flutter about the soul, and were soon chased away? And God by such a method keeps up the honour of his grace in men after regeneration, and teaches them the constant acknowledgement of his power in the whole management. Do we not daily find that the same reasonings and considerations which quicken us at one time in the ways of God stir us not at another, no more than a child can a millstone; that we are quickened by the same word at one time, under which we were dull and stupid at another; and the same truth is deliciously swallowed by us, which seemed unsavoury at another, because God edges it with a secret virtue at one time more than another? Hereby God would mind us to own him as the author of all our grace, the second grace as well as the first. Upon all these considerations this can be no other than the work of God. Can a corrupt creature elevate himself from a state of being hated by God, to a state of being delighted in by him? Satan's work none can judge it to be; the destroyer of mankind would never be the restorer; the most malicious enemy to God would never contribute to the rearing a temple to God in the soul, who has usurped God's worship in all parts of the world. Good angels could never do it, they wonder at it; the wisdom of God in thus creating all things in Jesus Christ is made known to them by it, [Eph. iii. 9, 10](#). They never ascribed it to themselves; if they did, they could never have been good, their goodness consisting in praising of God, and giving him his due. Good men never did it; the first planters of the gospel (whereby it is wrought) always gave God the praise of it, and acknowledged both their own action, and the success, to be the effect of the grace of God, and upon every occasion admired it, [Acts xi. 21, 23](#). It was 'the hand of the Lord' and 'the grace of God.'

III. The third general head, from what principles in God it flows, or what perfections of God are eminent in this work of regeneration. What is observable in the forming Christ

in the womb of the virgin, is observable in the forming Christ in the heart of a believer: grace to choose her to be the holy vessel; sovereignty to pitch upon her rather than any other of the lineage of David; truth to his promise in forming him in the womb of a virgin, and one of the house of David; wisdom and power in the formation of him in a virgin's womb, above the power of nature; mercy bears the first sway as the motive of the decree, but in a way of sovereignty to call out some, and not others; truth to himself obliges, after sovereign mercy had made the resolution; wisdom steps in to contrive the best way to accomplish what mercy had moved, and sovereignty had decreed; holiness rises up as the pattern; and power rides out for the execution. Mercy moves, sovereignty decrees, truth obliges, wisdom counsels, holiness regulates, power executes.

1. Mercy and goodness is a principal perfection of God, illustrious in this work. 'Born not of the will of man, but of God,' of the will of his mercy. Plato thought that heroes were born "ex eros Theon", from the love of God; divine love brings forth an heroic Christian into the world; all outward mercies are streams of God's goodness, but those are but trifles if compared with this. There is as much of God in imparting the holiness of his nature as in imputing the righteousness of his soul. We are justified by Christ, quickened by grace, saved by grace; grace is the womb of every spiritual blessing. To be delivered from places and company wherein we have occasions and temptations to sin, is an act which God owns as the fruit of his mercy: 'I brought thee out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees,' [Gen. xv. 7](#), an idolatrous place; it is a greater fruit of his goodness to be delivered from a nature which is the seed-plot of sin. 'He heals our backslidden nature,' because he 'loves us freely.' It is therefore called grace, which is not only goodness and mercy, but goodness with a more beautiful varnish and ornamental dress.

(1.) Therefore in this take notice of the peculiarity of mercy. Such a goodness that not one fallen angel ever had, or ever shall have a mite of; neither did mercy excite one good thought in God of new polishing any of those rebellious creatures; mercy cast no eye upon them, but justice left them to their malicious obstinacy. That the rivers of living water should refuse to run in such a channel, or flow out of such a belly, to run in the heart of a man more muddy! As peculiar grace pitched upon the very flesh of Christ, to be limited to the second person, so the like grace pitches upon this or that particular soul, to be united to the body of Christ. That singular love which chose Christ for the head, chose some men in him to be his members: 'Chosen us in him,' [Eph. i. 4](#). And the anointing which is upon the head is poured out by such a peculiarity of love upon the members, not only by an act of his power as God, but by an act of appropriated goodness, thy God, [Heb. i. 9](#). God anoints his fellows with that holy gracious unction, as their God, not only as God; for anointing him as the head, under that particular consideration, he anoints also his fellows, his members, under the same consideration too, because he is as well their God, the God of the members, as well as the God of the head, for they are his fellows in that unction; the difference lies in the

greater portion of grace given to the human nature of Christ. And the apostle Peter, [1 Peter i. 3](#), intimates in his thanksgiving to God, that God begot us as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' the paternal affection he bears to Christ being the ground of the regeneration of his people; the paternal affection first pitching upon Christ, then upon others in him. Indeed, it is a peculiar affection. In his mercy to the world, he acts as a rector or governor, in that relation he proposes laws, makes offers of peace, urges them in his word, strives with men by his Spirit, enduing men with reason, and deals with them as rational creatures; he uses affections and mercies, which might soften their hearts, did they not wilfully indulge themselves in their hardness. This is his rectoral mercy, or his mercy as a governor, and as much as his relation of a governor can oblige him to. If men will not change their lives, is God bound as a governor to force them to it, or not rather to punish them for it? But in regeneration there is a choicer affection, whereby, besides the relation of a governor, he puts on that of a father, and makes an inward and thorough change in some which he has chosen into the relation of children. As a father, who cannot persuade his son lying under a mortal distemper to take that physic which is necessary for saving his life, will compel him to it, open his month, and pour it in; but as he is a governor of his servant, he will provide it for him, and propose it to him. To do thus is kindness to his servant, though he does not manifest so peculiar an affection as he does to his son. God governs men as he is the author of nature; he renews men as he is the author of grace; he is the lawgiver and governor; it does not follow that where he is so he should be the new creator too; this is a peculiar indulgence.

(2.) As there is a peculiarity of mercy, so there is the largeness of his mercy and goodness in this work. It was his goodness to create us, but a full sea of goodness made us new creatures: [1 Peter i. 3](#), 'Who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to 'a lively hope,' "kata to polu autou eleos". His own mercy, without any other motive; much mercy, without any parsimony, not an act of ordinary goodness, but the deepest bowels of kindness, an everlasting spring of goodness, an exuberance of goodness. The choice love he bears to them in election cannot be without some real act; it is a vain love that does not operate; one great part of affection is to imitate the party beloved; but since that is unworthy of God to imitate a corrupt creature, he performs the other act of love, which is to assimilate us to himself, and bring us into a state of imitation of him, endowing us with principles of resemblance to him. It is abundant mercy to love them; it is much more goodness to render them worthy of his love, and inspire them with those qualities, as effects of his love of benevolence, which may be an occasion of his love of complacency. Worldly mercies do many times, yea, for the most part (if you view the whole globe of the earth) consist with his hatred, but this is a beam from a clear sun. At best other benefits are but the mercies of his hand, this of his heart. In those he makes men like others of a higher rank, in this like himself.

[1.] It is a goodness greater than that in creation. It is more an act of kindness to reform that which is deformed, than to form it at the beginning, because it is more to have a happy than a simple being. To repair what is decayed is a testimony of greater goodness than at first to raise it. Creation is terminated to the good of a mutable nature, regeneration is terminated to a supernatural good, and partaking of the divine nature. The creation was an emanation of his goodness, never entitled the work of his grace. Man's first uprightness was an impress of God; his second uprightness is far more pleasing to him, as being the fruit of his Son's death, wherein all his attributes are more highly glorified. It is a regeneration 'by the resurrection of Christ,' [1 Peter i. 3](#); that being the perfection of it, includes his death, which is the foundation of it, as the perfection of a thing includes the beginning. God pronounced all the structures of the first creation good, but not with those magnificent titles of his delighting in it, forming it for himself, that it might show forth his praise, which expressions testify a greater efflux of his goodness in this second creation. Nor did Christ ever say his delight was in that, or in that one man Adam, but in the sons of men, of apostate Adam, as to be redeemed and renewed by him after their apostasy: [Prov. viii. 31](#), 'My delights were with the sons of men.' What sons of men? The exhortation, ver. 32, intimates it, those that are his children renewed by him that hearken to him and keep his ways. God pronounced it good, but not his treasure, his portion, his inheritance, his *segullah*, his house, his diadem. All those things which he made, even the noblest heaven, as well as the lowest earth, he overlooks and speaks slightly of them: [Isa. lxvi. 1, 2](#), 'All those things has my hand made, and all those things have been,' &c., to fix his eyes, "avit", upon a contrite spirit, a renewed nature. He speaks of them as things passed away, and is intent only upon the new creation; values it above heaven and earth, and all the ceremonial worship. What is the object of his greatest estimation partakes of a greater efflux of his goodness to make it so. And the apostle Peter aggrandises this abundant mercy in regeneration, from the term, 'unto a lively hope;' not such an uncertain hope as Adam had when he was fullest of his mutable uprightness; a living hope, "elpida dzosan", that grows up more and more into life, till it comes to an inheritance that fades not away as Adam's did. Surely there is more of bowels in the Spirit's brooding over a sinful soul, to bring forth this beautiful frame, than in brooding over the confused mass to bring forth a world.

[2.] All the grace and goodness God has is employed in it. In the creation you cannot say, all the goodness of God was displayed, as not all his power nor all his wisdom: for as to his power he might have made millions of worlds inconceivably more beautiful and more wisely contrived; for though there be no defect of wisdom and power, yet neither of those attributes were exerted to that height that they might have been. So for his goodness, he might have made millions of more angels and men than he did create, with as (and more) illustrious natures; for a man may conceive something more than God has displayed in the creation, as to the extensiveness of his perfections at least. But in this God has displayed, as

it may seem, the utmost of his grace, for no man or angel can conceive a higher grace than what God shows in this, of beginning in man a likeness to himself, and perfecting it hereafter to as high a pitch as a creature is capable of. Therefore called 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' Eph. hi. 7. A further good cannot be imagined or found out than what is there displayed. Therefore the apostle Peter speaks of God as effectually calling us into his eternal glory by Christ, under the title of 'the God of all grace,' [1 Peter v. 10](#), which calling includes all preparation for glory. All grace does not less fit us for it, than call us to it, there is more of grace in fitting us for it than barely in calling us to it; and the call itself has more of grace in it than the giving the possession of that inheritance you are called unto. It is not so high a favour in a prince actually to set his royal bride in the throne with him, as to call her to and prepare her for so high a dignity. To prepare a soul for it by regeneration is an act of pure grace; to give it after a preparation for it, is an act of truth as well as grace; nothing obliged him to the first, his promise binds him to the latter. What if I should say, this renewing of us, and subduing our sins in us, is a greater act of grace than a bare remission! [Micah vii. 18, 19](#), seems to favour it. To pardon us is an act of his delightful mercy; but to subdue our iniquities is an act of his most tender compassion. Mercy is there joined with pardon, and compassion with subduing. And the latter expression, 'Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea,' may refer to both those acts of grace, against the guilt and filth of sin.

[3.] The freeness of his mercy is manifest in it. It is as free as election: [Eph. i. 3, 4](#), 'Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings' (of which regeneration is none of the meanest), 'according as he has chosen us in him', "kathos exelexato". It is as free in the stream as it is in the fountain. Jesus Christ is as freely formed in us, as we were freely chosen in him, as freely, *quoad nos*, as to us, not in regard of Christ, who merited the former though not the latter. It is his own mercy, [1 Peter i. 3](#), 'his own will,' [James i. 18](#), not moved by any other, as we do many things by the will of others when our own are not free, in which are mixed acts. It is in regard of this freeness called grace. Supposing God would create man, and for such an end as to enjoy blessedness, he could not create him otherwise than with a universal rectitude, because, had God created him with a temper contrary to his law, he had been the author of his sin. Some therefore call not the righteousness of Adam grace, because it was a perfection due to his nature upon his creation. But there was no necessity upon God to bestow new creating grace, after he had stripped himself of the righteousness of his first creation. And also supposing God will restore man to that end from which he fell, and refit him for that blessedness, he cannot fit him otherwise than by restoring him to that righteousness, as a means of attaining that blessedness. Yet both these are free, because the original foundation of both is free. God might choose whether he would create man when he was nothing, and choose whether he would restore man when he was fallen. Yet there is more freedom in this latter than in the former, in regard of the measures of the new created righteousness, and in regard of the immutability of it, in regard also of demerit. Adam's

dust, before creation, as it could merit nothing, so it had an advantage above us that it could not lie under demerit. But we, after the fall, are in a state of damnation, children of wrath, so that regeneration is not a creating us from nothing, but recovering us from a state worse than nothing. In regard that man was miserable, he was capable of mercy; but as he was a criminal, he was an object of severity. That is free mercy to renew any man by grace, when he might have damned him by justice, to work him for glory when he had wrought himself for damnation. The apostle therefore excludes all works whatsoever from any meritoriousness in this case: [Titus iii. 5](#), 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' I say, he excludes all works, because not one work, as good, was in being before the renewal of the soul, for so verse 3 plainly implies, when he concludes all men, himself too, in a state incapable of doing anything that was good; the honour of his truth indeed excites him to perfect it, but his grace only, without any other motive, moves him to bestow it. All the grace you have in regeneration sprung only from this; the righteousness you are arrayed with, the flames of love in your hearts, the flights of your faith, cost you nothing, they were all the births of love. Goodness decreed all when you were nothing, grace formed all when you were worse than nothing, your faith is 'the faith of God's elect,' [Titus i. 1](#). New creatures were chosen to faith by grace, and by the same grace was faith formed in the womb of the soul; electing grace preceded, renewing grace followed, the stream cannot be merited when the spring was free. Regeneration is an accessory to election. No man can merit the principle, therefore not the accessory.

2. As mercy and goodness, so the sovereignty of God is illustrious in this work. 'Of God,' in the text, is 'of the will of God.' The covenant runs in a royal style: 'I will put my Spirit into them; I will give a heart of flesh,' of my own free motion and good pleasure, like the patents of princes. God reserves this in his own power, to give to whom he pleases; Cameron says, that faith, which is a great constitutive part of regeneration, was not purchased meritoriously by Christ's death; and though Christ does give us faith as well as repentance, yet he does that, not as considered as a satisfier of God's justice in his death, but as God's commissioner in his exaltation, being empowered by God to give the conditions upon which they agreed together in the first compact about the work of mediation, unto all those that God had given him to satisfy for. Whether this opinion be well grounded or no, I will not determine; yet the making it depend solely upon election, and to be given as a fruit of election, that hereby we may be partakers of Christ, makes it more fully depend upon the sovereignty of God. God renews when he pleases. 'The wind blows where it lists,' [John iii. 8](#). To some he affords means, to others not; he deals not with every nation as he dealt with Israel. In some, he works by means; to others, he gives only the means without any inward work; it is his pleasure that he works upon any one to will, his good pleasure that he gives to and one to do: [Philip. ii. 13](#), 'of his good pleasure.' Some hear the word, others the Spirit in the word;

some feel the striking of the air upon their ear, others the stamp of the Spirit upon their hearts. Who chose this rough stone to hew and polish, and let others lie in the quarry? Who frames this for a statue, a representation of himself, and leaves another upon the pavement? What does all this result from, but his sovereign pleasure?

(1.) No ultimate reason can be rendered for this distinction, but God's sovereignty. We can render an immediate reason of some actions of God: why the heavens are round, because that is the most capacious figure, and fittest for motion; why the sun is the centre of the world, as some think, because it may, at a convenient distance, enlighten the stars above, and quicken the things below; why our hearts are in the midst of our bodies, because they may more commodiously afford heat to all the members; so also, why God loved Adam, because he saw his own image in him; why he sends judgments upon the world, because of sin; why he saves believers and condemns unbelievers, because they receive the grace of Christ, those reject it. We have not recourse immediately to God's will for a reason; the nature of the things themselves affords us one, obvious to us. But no reason can be rendered of other actions of God but his good pleasure. Why he chose Abraham above other men, and delivered him from Ur of the Chaldees; why Israel above other nations, since all other men and nations descended from Adam and Noah, and they were in their natures equally corrupt with others; they were not in themselves better than others, nor other nations worse than they; so in Esau and Jacob, why the elder should serve the younger, since they both issued from the same parents, lay in the same womb, were equally depraved in their nature, had original sin equally conveyed to them by their parents: no reason can be rendered but the will of God. So, if it be asked, why men are condemned, because they do not believe. Why do they not believe? Because they will not. God has given them means and faculties. If you ask, why God did not give them grace to believe and turn their wills, no other answer can be given but because he will not. It is his free will to choose some and not others. Election is put upon his pleasure: [Eph. i. 5](#), 'Predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will;' and the making known the mystery of his will is put upon his pleasure: [Eph. i. 9](#), 'Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure.' As God regards us absolutely, it is rather mercy than his good pleasure. Why has he changed our wills? Because he loved us, and bare good will to us in his everlasting purpose, to which he was incited by his own mercy. But if we compare ourselves with others, and ask, why he renews this man and not that, then it is rather an act of the sovereign liberty of his will, for there cannot be the result of any reason from any thing else; he pitches his compassion where and upon whom he pleases. The apostle joins mercy and this sovereignty of his will together: [Rom. ix. 15](#), 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' He is so absolute a sovereign, that he will give no account of these matters but his own good pleasure. Why he renews any man is merely voluntary; why he saves renewed men is just; why he justifies those that believe is justice to Christ and mercy

to them; but why he bestows faith on any is merely the good pleasure of his will. The pharisees believed not, because they were not of Christ's sheep, [John x. 26](#); that is, they were not given to Christ by the Father, as is intimated, verse 29. And the prosperity of those which are given to Christ is resolved wholly into the pleasure of God: 'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,' [Isa. liii. 10](#). In all our searches into the cause of this, we must rest in his sovereign pleasure; our Saviour himself renders this only as a reason of his distinguishing mercy, wherein himself does, and therefore we must, acquiesce: [Mat. xi. 27](#), 'Even so, Father, for so it pleased thee.'

(2.) We may well do so, because he is no debtor to any man in the way of grace. There is nothing due to man but death; that is his wages; the other is a gift: [Rom. vi. 23](#), 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to them it is not given,' [Mat. xiii. 11](#). Who shall control him in the disposal of his own goods? 'Who shall say unto him, What dost thou?' Grace is his own treasure; if he gives the riches of it to any, it is his pleasure; if he will not bestow a mite on any man, it is no wrong; 'if any man has given to him, it shall be recompensed to him again,' [Rom. xi. 35](#). It is not unjust with God to deny every man grace; it is not then unjust to deny a great part of men this grace: 'Who has enjoined him his way?' says Job; or, 'Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?' [Job xxxvi. 23](#). He is not to be taught by man how to govern the world, neither can any man justly blame him, if they judge aright of his actions. Though every man is bound to endeavour the conversion of others, and every good man has so much charity that he would turn all to righteousness if he could, and though the love of God is infinitely greater than man's, it cannot be argued from thence that therefore God should renew every man. This charity in man is a debt he owes to his neighbour by communion of blood, upon which the law of charity is founded, which obliges him to endeavour the happiness and welfare of his neighbour; but God is free from the engagements of any law, but the liberty of his own will; he is under no government but his own; he has none superior, none equal with him, to enjoin him his way, and to prescribe him rules and methods. If he gives any favour to man, it is his pleasure; if man improves it well, God is not indebted to him, and obliged to give him more, no more than a father is bound to give his son a new stock, because he has improved well the first he has entrusted him with; it depends only upon his pleasure.

(3.) God's proceedings in this case do wholly declare it. In the first gift of his people to Christ, he acted like a God greater than all in a way of super-eminent sovereignty: 'My Father which gave them me is greater than all', [John x. 29](#). He acts as a potter with his clay; he softens one heart, and leaves another to its natural hardness. He converts Paul a persecutor, but none of the other pharisees who spurred him on in that fury and commissioned him to it; he snatches some from the embracements of lust, while he suffers others to run their race to hell. David, by grace, is made a man after God's own heart, and Saul left to be a man after his own will; some he changes in the heat of their pursuit of sinful pleasures, others he

wounds to death by his judgments. The reason of the latter is deserved justice; the reason of the other is undeserved pleasure. He chooses the mean things of the world to be highest in his favour, and passes over those that the world esteems most excellent. 'Not many wise, not many mighty,' is his sovereign method. The amiable endowments esteemed by the men of the world have no influence upon him. He acts in this way with his own people; he gives sometimes to will, when he does not give presently to do; he distributes greater measures of grace to one than to another; he sometimes excites them by his grace, sometimes lets them lie as logs before him, that he may be owned by them to be a free agent. And further, it must needs be thus, because God does not work in regeneration as a natural agent, and put forth his strength to the utmost; as the sun shines, and the fire burns, *ad extremum virium*, unless a cloud interpose to hinder the one, or water quench the other, but as an arbitrary agent, who exerts his power according to his own will, and withholds it according to his pleasure. For there are two acts of his sovereign will: one whereby he does command men to do their duty, promises rewards, and threatens punishment, but the subject is to be disposed to do God's will of precept. Here comes in another act of his sovereignty, whereby he wills the disposing such and such hearts to the accepting of his grace, and does will not to give others that grace, but leave them to themselves. This we see practised by God almost in every day's experience.

3. The truth of God is apparent in this work. Truth to his own purpose: [1 Tim. i. 9](#), 'Who has called us with a holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began.' Sovereignty first singles this or that man out; and truth to that firm and immutable counsel, and that resolve in his own mind, steps in to excite his holiness, wisdom, and power, to make every such person conformed to the image of his Son. It was not from any truth respecting any condition annexed to any promise he had made which he might find in the creature, for the apostle plainly excludes it, 'not according to our work'; for what motion can our work in a state of nature cause in God but that of anger and aversion arising from truth to his threatening, the condition whereof is fulfilled by us, but not one mite of good fruit that could as a condition challenge this great work at the hands of the truth of God by virtue of his promise. His truth to his threatening would have raised up thoughts of destroying men; his truth to his purpose carried on his design of effectually calling them. It is not an engagement of truth to his creature, but of truth to himself. So that if you ask why he has Peter, Paul, and others, since many better conditioned than they have rejected the gospel, the answer is, because he had so purposed in himself; and he is faithful, and cannot deny his own counsel, for that were to deny himself, and that eternal idea in his own mind: [2 Tim. ii. 13](#), 'He is faithful, and cannot deny himself,' in regard of his purpose, in regard of his absolute promise. Truth to his promise; his promise to his Son, for so [Titus i. 2](#) is principally to be understood: 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' There was a donation of some made to Christ,

and a donation of grace to Christ for them, deposited in his hands as a treasure to be dispensed to every one of them in their proper time. His truth comes in upon this double donative: a donative of grace to them in Christ, before the world began, which would be but as a useless rusty treasure, if not bestowed upon those for whom it was entrusted in his hands; a donative of some, according to this purpose, to Christ, whose death, and resurrection, and purchase, would be ineffectual, if those thus given were not in time engrafted in him, and renewed by him, to be made partakers of all that which he purchased and preserved for them. Jesus Christ was to have a seed by covenant, a people to be conformed to his image. The issue then of forming a people for his seed, is the effect of God's truth to Christ. And consequent to this antecedent purpose in himself, and promise to Christ, he gives him an order to bring in those that were thus designed to be his sheep, which he calls his sheep by right of donation, before they were renewed: my sheep, by right of gift from my Father, mine by right of purchase at my death, mine by right of possession at their effectual call, these I must bring in; not I may, but I must; and they shall hear my voice: [John x. 16](#), 'Other sheep I have; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice;' not they may, but they shall be inclined to comply with my word and call. Satan and their own lusts shall not hinder them from coming unto me, but they shall be overruled by a powerful Spirit. So that there is truth to his purpose, truth to his promise to Christ' truth to the *depositum* in Christ's hands, truth to his word published, that he would give a new heart. So that whatsoever heart his work is wrought in, it is a manifest effect of the truth of God to himself and his Christ. The gift of grace, in possession, is a necessary consequent of that gift of it, in purpose, before the world began.

4. The wisdom of God appears in this work. The secrets of wisdom shine forth in the great concerns of the soul in Christ, who is made wisdom principally to us in our sanctification, as well as righteousness and redemption. Wisdom in the imputation of righteousness, in the draught of sanctification, and in the perfection of it in a complete redemption; wisdom, like thread, runs through every part of the web. The new birth is the great wisdom of the creature; by this he becomes wise, since the Scripture entitles all fools without it. The inspiration of this wisdom can own no other but divine wisdom for the author. It is his own wisdom; for 'Who has been his counsellor?' [Rom. xi. 34](#). He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, freely, wisely; a work of his will, a work of his understanding: [Eph. i. 11, 12](#), 'Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory,' that the glory of the Father may shine out in us. If all things are thus wrought with the choicest counsel, much more the rarest work of God in the world. If all things are wrought with counsel, because he will have a praise from them, much more that from whence he expects to gather the greatest crop of glory. The bringing us to trust in Christ is for the praise of his glory; a glory redounds to him, because there is nothing of our own in it, but all his; a farther glory redounds to him, because it is in the wisest manner.

It is to the praise and the glory of his goodness in the act of his will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom in the act of his counsel. There was a mystery of wisdom in the first secretion and singling out this or that person; a revelation of wisdom in the preparations to it, and formation of it. If there be much of his counsel in the minute passages of his providence in the lowest creatures, which are the subjects of that providence, much more must there be in the framing the soul to be a living monument of his glory. It is not a new moulding the outward case of the body, but the inward jewel wrapped up from the view of men; the spirit of the mind, which, being more excellent, requires more of skill for the new forming of it.

(1.) The nature of the new birth declares it to be an effect of his wisdom. It is a building a divine temple, a spiritual tabernacle, for his own residence: 'ye are God's building,' [1 Cor. iii. 9](#). Strength will not build a house without art to contrive and proportion the materials; skill is the chief requisite of an architect. The highest pieces of art come from the most excellent idea in the creature. The beautiful fabric of grace is modelled by the wisest idea in God; that which is glorious in the erection, supposes excellent skill in the contrivance. Every renewed man is a 'lively stone:' [1 Pet. ii. a](#), 'Ye also as lively stones,' every one of you polished and carved by the wise Creator for an everlasting statue. It is he that has 'wrought us to the self-same thing,' [2 Cor. v. 6](#), "katargasamenos"; polished us and curiously wrought us, who were rough stones, covered with the rubbish of sin. As a wise builder, he lays the foundation in sound habits, whereon to raise a superstructure of gracious actions. The counterpart in the heart is no less a fruit of his wisdom than the law in the tables of stone; wisdom in the first framing the law, wisdom also in the deep imprinting of it. That which enlightens the eyes, and makes wise to salvation, can be entitled to no other original cause than divine wisdom. The soul is a rational work of God. Surely, then, that which is the soul of the soul, the glory of the creature, the preparation for happiness, more pleasing to God than the brightest nature, than the natural frame of the highest soul, that which is the pleasure and delight, must be the fruit, too, of infinite wisdom. Bare effects of power are not the immediate objects of God's special delight.

(2.) The means of it declare it to be a fruit of his wisdom. Christ the exemplar has the treasures of wisdom; grace copied from it is part of those treasures. The gospel, the instrument, is 'the wisdom of God,' as well as 'the power of God,' [1 Cor. ii. 7](#). Divine skill framed the model, reared the building, no less sows the seed in the heart. What did partake of wisdom in the contrivance, progress, all the parts and methods of it, partakes of the same in the inward operations of it upon the soul.

(3.) The manner of it speaks it to be so. In regard of the enemies he has to deal with, there must be prudence to countermine the deep and unsearchable plots of the powers of darkness. As there is the strength of sin within, the might of Satan without, as fit subjects for his power, so there are the stratagems of Satan, the subtleties and deceits of the flesh, as a fit occasion for his almighty skill against hellish policy. In regard also of his working upon

the soul, he works upon those that are so contrary to his design without imposing upon their faculties; he moves them according to their physical nature, though contrary to their moral nature; he makes us do willingly what we would not; he so tunes the strings that they speak out willingly what naturally they are most unfit for. The Spirit acts wisely in the revealing to us the knowledge of Christ, as [Eph. i. 17](#), 'The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,' which may note the manner of his acting in the revelation, which is the first work of the soul, as well as the effect it does produce, though I suppose the effect is principally meant. Some question the wisdom of God in acting so upon the will as not to leave it to its own indifference in this change. What reason is there to question his wisdom? Do not the angels in heaven admire God's wisdom as well as his grace, who has immutably fixed them to that which is good? Do they question the wisdom of God for so happy a confirmation of them against that indifference which destroyed some of their fellows by creation? But is there not an evident art in this work, to make the will willing that had no affection to this change; to fit the key so to all the wards that not one is disordered; to move us contrary to our corrupt reason, yet bring us to that pass to acknowledge we had reason to be so moved; to move our faculties one by another as wheels in a watch; to present spiritual things with such an evident light as engages our understandings to believe that which they would not believe before, and our wills to embrace that which our affections gainsay? It must therefore be a fruit of divine skill since it is a fruit of divine teaching, [John vi. 45](#).

(4.) There is a greater wisdom in it than in the creation of the world. The higher the work rises, the more of skill appears. It is a divine art to make man to live the life of plants in his growth, the life of beasts in his sense, the life of angels in his mind; more it is then to make him live the life of God in his grace. Man in his body partakes of earth, in his soul of heaven, in his grace of the heaven of heavens, of the God of heaven. The grace in the new birth is nearer the likeness of God than the figure of men in the first birth. God therefore does more observe the numbers and measures in the second creation than he did in the first. Man was the most excellent piece in the lower creation, therefore more of art in the framing of him than in the whole celestial and elementary world. The glorious bodies of sun, moon, and stars had not such marks upon them. The nearer resemblance anything has to God, the more of wisdom as well as power is signified in the make of it.

(5.) The holiness of God is seen in this work. The day of God's power breaks not upon us in the change of our wills, without his appearance in 'the beauties of holiness,' [Ps. cx. 3](#). The Spirit is called a spirit of holiness, not only as he is the efficient, but as he is the pattern, and like fire transforms into his own nature; for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The law in the tables of stone was an image; the law in the heart is an extract of God's holiness. Our first creation in a mutable state was according to his own image, [Gen. i. 26](#). Our second creation is more exactly like him, in a gracious immutability. The holiness in Christ's human nature was an effect of the holiness of God; the holiness we have then in resemblance to

Christ, must be a fruit of the same perfection. If we are renewed according to his image, it must be according to his holiness. To be merciful and just, is to have a moral image; to be holy, is to have a divine. The apostle intimates this in his exhortation, we must be holy in serving him, because he was holy in calling us: [1 Peter i. 16](#), 'As he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy,' &c. In this respect, God calls himself, not only a holy one, but the holy one of Israel: [Isa. xliiii. 15](#), 'I am the Lord your holy one, the creator of Israel, your king.' He is not only holy in himself, but displays his holiness in them, by an act of a new creation. By *creator* is not meant, his being the creator of them, as he is of all, even of wicked men and devils; but implies a peculiar relation to them, as distinguished from others. He is the creator of devils, holy in his actions towards devils, but not their *holy one* by any inward renovation, or consecrating them to himself, as he is the holy one of Israel. As he is a God in covenant, he is our God, therefore our God as he is a holy God, as well as he is a powerful God, communicating the one as well as the other in a covenant way, therefore the prophet Habakkuk joins them both together, 'O Lord my God, my holy one,' [Hab. i. 12](#). His holiness is no less necessary for the felicity of his people, than his mercy and power. What happiness could his mercy move, his wisdom contrive, or his power effect, without the communication of his holiness? Mercy could not of itself fit a man for it, nor power give a man possession of it, without holiness attiring him with all those graces which prepare him for it. God, as sovereign, chose us; as merciful, pardons us; as wise, guides us; as powerful, protects us; as true, makes good his promises to us; but as holy, cleanses us from our old habits, makes us vessels of honour, filled with the savoury and delicious fruits of his Spirit, his pleasant things. The implantation of grace in the heart, is no less an effect of his holiness, than the preservation of it is, which our Saviour intimates, when in his petition for it he gives his Father rather the title of holy, than of any other attribute: [John xvii. 11](#), 'Holy Father, keep through thy own name.'

6. The power of God appears in this work. 'Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind,' [John ix. 32](#); neither was it ever heard that any man could open the understanding of one that was born dark. Everything that pertains to life and godliness, of which regeneration is not the meanest, is the work of divine power: [2 Peter i. 3](#), 'According as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue;' glory and virtue, by a *hendiadis*, for a glorious virtue; and the apostle adds, that this calling was an effect of a glorious power; it is not "eis", but "dia", *through* glory and virtue; the same preposition "dia", which, as joined with knowledge, is translated *through*; as much as to say, through a glorious virtue or power, both "agete" and *virtus*, signifying valour and strength in their several languages. When God hardens a man, he only withdraws his grace. But a divine virtue is necessary for the cure of our hereditary disease. There is no great force required to cut a dead man, but to raise him requires an extraordinary power. We may as well

deny this work to be a new creation, a resurrection, as deny it to be an act of divine power. There is a word that calls; there is also a power to work: [1 Thes. i. 5](#). 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost;' that is, the power of the Holy Ghost. There was not only grace in the word, to woo, but the power of the Holy Ghost in it, to overcome the heart. There is not only an act of an almighty Spirit, but an act of his almightiness. The hand of the Lord created the world, 'the heavens are the work of his fingers,' [Ps. viii. 3](#); but grace is the work of 'his arms,' [Isa. liii. 1](#). It may be said of the first grace in the new birth, as it was of Reuben, [Gen. xlix. 3](#), it is his 'might, the beginning of his strength, and the excellency of his power.' Though ministerial gifts were as excellent as Paul's, whose preaching was with demonstration and power, and who knew the readiest ways to men's hearts, if a man ever did, yet 'the excellency of the power was of God;' and when he brandished his spiritual weapons, they were only 'mighty through God,' [2 Cor. x. 4](#). Though the declaration was his, yet the working was Christ's, [Rom. xv. 18](#); none of his people are willing, till the day of his power, [Ps. cx. 3](#).

(1.) It is as great, yea, greater power, than that put forth in creation. It is as great; it is the introduction of another form, not in a way of any action or fashion, but in such a manner as was in the creation, that is, by the mighty operation of God; otherwise it could not be called a new creature though it might be called a new thing. You call not that which is made by the art or power of man, as a watch, a clock, a house, a new creature; for there is nothing of creation in them, but art and industry, setting the pieces of matter, created to their hands, together in such a form or figure. But this is called a new creature, not so much in regard of the newness of the thing, but in regard of the power that wrought it, and the manner of working it, being the same with that of creation. And being termed so, it implies the exerting an efficacious power; for creation is not brought by a cessation of action (which would be in God, if the will were only the cause of it) but the employment of an active virtue. God does not hold his hand in his bosom, but spreads it open, and applies it to an efficacious action. Since it is a new creation, it implies a creator, and a creative power, creation cannot be without both. It is a greater power expended in regeneration than in creation; more power morally in this, than physically in that. One word created the world; many words are combined for the new preparation of the heart. It is easier to make a thousand glasses, than to set together one that is dashed in pieces. It is easier with God to make a world (*quoad nos*, as to our conception, for all things are alike easy with God), and create thousands of men with his image, as bright as Adam's, than to bring that into form which is so miserably defaced.

[1.] First, In regard of the subject, sin has turned man into a beast, and omnipotence only can turn a bestial man into angelical and divine. There is a less distance between the least dust and the glorious God, than there is between the holy God and an impure sinner; sin and grace are more contrary to one another, than *aliquid* and *nihil*, something and

nothing. A straw may with less power be made a star, than a corrupted sinner be made a saint. In creation, God was only to put in nature, here he is to 'put off' one that is strong, and to bring in another altogether strange and new, it is hard to bring a man off from his old stock, and as hard to make him nakedly to trust Christ. It is more difficult to make a man leave his sin, than to change his opinion, since men are more in love with habitual wickedness than with any opinion whatsoever. In regard of the indisposedness of the soul. There is some foundation for a natural religion, there being general notions of God and his attributes, which would administer some conclusions that he was to be feared and revered; and according to these notions many cheeks of conscience, which would induce men to some moral behaviour towards God. But in the setting our hearts right to God, and creating them in a mediator, there was not the least dust in nature to build upon. In the creating of Adam's body, there was some pre-existent matter, the dust of the ground, whereof his body has by a divine power made and organised; but we meet with no pre-existent matter for the formation of the soul, which made him a rational creature; that indeed was the breath of God, not engendered by any concurring cause in nature. There is no pre-existent matter in the creature, of which this image is formed, though there be a pre-existent subject to receive the impression of it; it is not the rearing anything upon the foundation of nature, but introducing a nature wholly new, which speaks almighty. In regard of the contradiction in the subject. The stream of man's natural reason, the principles, of self, whereby he is guided, run counter to it, there is a pride of reason which will not stoop to the gospel, which in man's wisdom is counted foolishness. Man is an untamed heifer, a wild ass that snuffs up the wind, full of hatred to the ways of God, guided by gigantic lusts, which make as great a resistance as a mountain of brass; stoutness of heart, strong prejudices against the law of God, fierceness of affection, drinking iniquity like water, universal madness, resisting the spirit, hare-brained imaginations; frowardness in the will, forwardness to evil, perversity against good; can anything, less than an almighty power, make a universal cure? It is more easy to make men stoop to some victorious prince, and become his vassals, than to bring men to a submission to God and his laws, which they entertain with contempt and scorn. Nothing obeyed God's word in the creation; though it contributed not to his design, yet it could not oppose him, it could not swell against him, because it has nothing. But every sinner is rebellious, disputes God's commands, fortifies himself against his entrance, gives not up himself without a contest. This pride is hereditary, it bore sway in the heart ever since Adam's fall, and has prescription of as long a standing as the world to plead for possession. What but infinite power can fling down this pride at the foot of the cross, make the heart strike its swelling sail to Christ, and become nothing in itself, that Christ may be all life in him, and all righteousness to him? It is only possible to God to make a camel, with this bunch on its back, pass through a needle's eye; no less than divine power can bring down these armies of opposite imaginations, which have both multitude and strength (and no man knows either

their number or strength), and the whole frame of contradiction against the grace of Christ. Our Saviour intimates this creative power in that thanksgiving to his Father: [Matt. xi. 25](#), 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,' &c. Christ, in all his addresses to his Father, used attributes and titles suitable to the business he insisted on. The revelation of divine knowledge to babes, the moulding their hearts to receive it, was an act of God as he is Lord of heaven and earth, putting forth an infinite power in the forming of it. If God were the author of grace in the hearts of those babes, persons better disposed, and nearer the kingdom of heaven, as he was Lord of heaven and earth, then there must be some greater power than that of the creation of the world put forth to conquer the wise and prudent, whose wisdom and prudence stands armed in the breaches of nature to beat off the assaults of the gospel.

[2.] In regard of the opposition of the present possessors. The chasing out an armed devil, that has kept the palace in peace so long, must be by a power superior to his own, [Luke xi. 21, 22](#). This great Goliath has his armour about him, has had long possession and dearest affections; the impulses of natural concupiscence take his part; he has his alluring baits, his pleasing proposals; the world and the flesh are linked with him in a league to hinder the restoration of the soul to Christ, and the restoration of God's image to the soul. A threefold cord is not easily broken. It must be a power superior to those three great posters in conjunction, that must bind the strong man; and casting him out, and spoiling his goods, are acts of power, [Mat. xii. 29](#). Satan is too strong to be easily cast out, and the flesh loves him too dearly to be easily divorced from him; he is never like to lay down his arms by persuasions; though all the angels in heaven should entreat him, he would not give up one foot of his empire. Nay, though what God does propose has a greater weight of goodness, pleasure, and profit in itself, than what those three great impostors can offer, yet, since reason is weak and mightily corrupted under the conduct of sense, which has an alliance with Satan's proposals, and first sucks them in, it is not like to meet with any entertainment, as being against the interest of the flesh; and the will being backed with two such powerful seconds, as Satan and the world, to assist it in its refusals. Indeed, if he that is in the regenerate, were not greater and more powerful than he that is in the world, they would not be able to resist his allurements and subtilties, [1 John iv. 4](#). The triumphs of Christ at his ascension declare his power in his acquisition; with a strong hand he broke the chain of sinners, and 'led captivity captive' before he gave gifts to men, [Ps. lxxviii. 18](#). He does the like in giving grace to the heart; he rides upon his white horse in the power of almighty grace, when he conquers the enmity in the soul, as well as when he overcomes the enemies of his church, [Rev. vi. 2](#).

(2.) It is a power as great as that which wrought in the resurrection of Christ. It is considerable how loftily the apostle sets it out: [Eph. i. 19, 20](#), 'And what is 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, and set him at his own right hand

in heavenly places.' Exceeding greatness of his power, "huperthallon", with an hyperbole, according to the working or efficaciousness of his mighty power, noting the infusion of faith in the soul by a powerful impression, 'according to the working of the might or strength.' One word was not enough to signify the great power working: it is strength with a greater edge upon it; as when a man would fetch a mighty blow, he stirs up all his strength, sets his teeth on edge to summon all his spirits to assist his arm. The power of God in creation of nature is never in the whole Scripture set forth so magnificently as his power in the creation of grace is in this place. The apostle picks not out any examples of God's power in his ordinary works, or that power in lesser miracles which exceeded the power of nature, to illustrate this power by. He does not say, It is that power whereby we work miracles or speak with tongues: no; neither is it that power whereby our Saviour wrought such miracles when he was in the world. It is a more illustrious power than the giving sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, yea, or life to a putrefied carcass, this is an extraordinary power. But yet this gracious power is higher than all this, for it is as great as that which wrought the two greatest miracles that ever were acted in the creation as great as the raising Jesus Christ perfectly dead in the grave, and having the weight of the sin of the world upon him, and as great as that power which, after the raising of him, set him in his human nature at his right hand, above principalities and powers, above the whole angelical state, as much as to say, As great as all that power which wrought the whole scene of the redemption, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone. It is such an unconquerable power, whereby God brings about all his decrees which terminated in Christ. Some say this power is not exercised in the begetting faith, but in the faithful after faith is begun. It is very strange that a less power is necessary to beget, than to preserve a thing after it is brought into being. And the same power is requisite to raise the heart of the most moral man under heaven out of the grave of corrupted nature, as well as those that are furthest in their dispositions from God. As, had not our Saviour had the weight of the sins of men upon him, had he been dead but an hour or two, lain in the grave with a little loose or light sand cast upon him, it would have required infinite power to have restored him to life. The apostle mentions this in other places, though not so highly as in this: [Rom. vi. 4](#) 'That like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.' It must be understood thus. Even so we, being raised up by the glory of the Father, should walk in newness of life. And it may be partly the meaning of the apostle Peter, [1 Peter i. 3](#), 'Who has begotten us to a lively hope by, or through, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' not only as the foundation of our hopes, but by a power conformable to that which raised Christ from the dead. I would only by the way note, that this infers a higher operation than merely an exhortation and suasion; for would any man say of a philosopher that had taught him morality, that he had displayed in him the exceeding greatness of his power, only upon the account of advising and counselling him to reform his manners, and live more soberly and honestly

in the world? Our Saviour esteemed this one thing greater than all the other miracles he wrought, and declared himself to be the Christ more by this than by any other. When John sent to know who he was. he returns no other account than the list of his miracles: 'The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached,' [Luke vii. 20](#). That which brings up the rear as the greatest is, 'the poor "euangelidzontai", are evangelised;' it is not to be taken actively of the preaching of the gospel, but passively, that they were wrought upon by the gospel, and became gosselled people, transformed into the mould of it, else it would bear no analogy to the other miracles; the deaf hear, and the dead were raised; they had not exhortations to hear and live, but the effects were wrought in them; so those words import not only the preaching of the gospel to them, but the powerful operation of the gospel in them. This greatest miracle in the catalogue is the only miracle our Saviour has left in the world since the cessation of all the rest.

I have insisted the longer upon these perfections in God apparent in this work.

1. To stir up every renewed person to a thankful frame towards God, that he should engage his choicest attributes for the good of a poor creature. To what purpose did the apostle so long and so highly speak of the power of God in raising them from a spiritual death, but that they should acknowledge it, and admire God for it? It cannot but raise high admirations and adorations of God, to consider how mercy moved for them, sovereignty called them out, wisdom modelled them, holiness cleansed them, and power framed them.

2. To stir up deep humility. It is a plain declaration of our miserable estate by nature, and the difficulty of emerging out of it, impossible for any creature to effect. Had not God been infinitely merciful, wise, holy, true, and omnipotent, and put forth his power to free men from a slavery to sin, not a man had been able to escape out of it; and these two, admiration of God, and humiliation of self, are the two great acts of a Christian, which set all other graces on work. Mercy speaks us very miserable, wisdom declares us fools, holiness unclean, and power extremely weak.

3. How mightily will it give a ground to the exercise of faith! He that is deeply sensible of this work of holiness and power in him, cannot but trust God upon his deed, as well as before he did upon his word. As you go to the promises without you, consider also the counterpart of the promise within you, and the efficacy of that power which wrought it. You have a ground of faith within you; the power extends to every one wherein this work is wrought: 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;' this the apostle speaks to all the believing Ephesians.

4. Therefore look much into yourselves by way of examination, to observe the actions of God's wisdom, holiness, and power within you. The want of this makes many gracious persons live disconsolately. Paul was certainly diligent in his observation, since he speaks so feelingly and experimentally of it. It is the way to answer Satan's objections, silence unbe-

lieving thoughts, when you can trace the steps and operations of them in you; it would make you strive for an increase of this work of regeneration, that you may feel in yourselves more evidences of the holiness and power of God.

5. Those that want it may well despair of attaining it by themselves and their own strength. Divine wisdom and power are exerted in this work, and men may as well think themselves able to raise a dead man, yea, Christ from the grave, and set him at the right hand of God, as do this by their own strength. If we want an eye or a hand, all the creation cannot furnish us with either. How can any power but that which is infinite give us an eye to look to Christ within the veil, and a hand to clasp him in heaven?

6. It directs men where to seek it, and to seek it earnestly. At the hands of God, since infinite wisdom, holiness, and power, are necessary for the production of it. With earnestness, because it is so transcendent a work, has so many perfections of God shining in it, that creature-strength and wisdom is utterly unable to frame and raise it; and with hopes too, if they earnestly seek it, since God has hereby declared himself infinitely loving, in the combination of so many attributes for the effecting of it. Plead, therefore, the glory of God in these his attributes, and if God give you a heart to seek it, it is a probable argument he will give you that grace which he has given you a heart to desire.

IV. Quest. How God does this?

1. This work is secret, and therefore difficult to be described. The effects are as obvious to a spiritual sense, as the methods of it obscure to our understandings; secret as the original of winds, sensible as the sound and bluster of them, [John iii. 8](#). If a dead man were raised, he would not know the manner how his soul returned into the body, how it took its former place, and made up a new union, yet he would know that he lives and moves. A gracious soul knows that he was carnal, and now spiritual, blind, and that he now sees. He finds strength instead of weakness, inclinations to good instead of opposition, sweetness in the ways of God instead of bitterness. The methods of grace are obscure as those of nature: [Eccles. xi. 5](#), 'Who knows the way of the spirit, or how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child? even so thou knows not the works of God who makes all.' The manner of the formation of Christ in the soul is as undiscernible as the formation of a child, or the manner of Christ's conception in the womb of the virgin, both which are fearful and wonderful, as it is said of the first, [Ps. cxxxix. 14](#), 'Who can declare his generation?' [Isa. liii. 8](#); that is, the generation of Christ, either in his person or in his people. We cannot give a satisfactory account of the natural motions of our souls, how one faculty commands another, how the soul governs the several parts of the body, what the nature of the action of our mind is in contemplation and reflection, how our wills move the spirits in the body, whereby the members are acted in their motion, and the functions of life performed. Much more undiscernible are the supernatural methods of the Spirit of God. We know ourselves heirs to the corruption of the first Adam by the inbeing of it, the light of the grace of the second Adam

discovers itself in the soul, but the manner of the descent of either is not easily to be determined. The loadstone's attracting of iron is the best representation of this work; the soul, like that, moves sensibly, cleaves strongly to God; but wherein this virtue consists, how communicated, both in that of nature and this of spirit, dazzles the eye of reason.

2. Yet this is evident, that it is rational; that is, congruous to the essential nature of man. God does not deal with us as beasts, or as creatures destitute of sense, but as creatures of an intelligent order. Who is there that believes in Christ in such a manner as heavy things fall to the earth, or light things fly up to the air, or as beasts run at the beck of their sensual appetite, without rule or reason? If the Spirit of God wrought so upon man, this were to lay our faculties asleep, not to act them, but to act only upon them; this were to invert the natural order by creation, to raze out the foundations of virtue, and deny the creature the pleasure of his condition, who, according to such a manner of operation, could not understand his own state, no more than a brute can the harmony of music, or the pleasing variety of colours. But grace perfects our souls, possesses them with new principles, moves one faculty by another, like the motions of the wheels in a clock or watch; like the common course of providence, wherein he orders all affairs according to the dependence of them one upon another by creation, without making any inroad upon the natural rights of any creature, but preserving them entire, unless in some miraculous action. He diffuses a supernatural virtue into the soul, not to thwart it in that course of working he appointed it in the creation, but to move it agreeably to its nature as a rational being. As the sun conveys a celestial virtue upon the plants, drawing them forth by its influence according to their several natures, so the Holy Ghost introduces a supernatural principle into men, whereby they act as reasonable creatures in a higher strain. What methods our Saviour used in the first declaration of the gospel, he uses in the propagation of it in the hearts of men. The same reason that is used in writing the indenture is used in writing the counterpart. He might, by his omniscient wisdom, have found the way to the most secret corner of every man's heart, and by his power have set up what standard he pleased in every part of the castle, without proposing the gospel in the way of miracles and arguments; but he transacts all that affair in such a manner, that men might be moved in a rational way to their own happiness. He required a rational belief, as he gave rational evidences: [John x. 37](#), 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not;' that is, the works that none but one empowered by God could do. God, that requires of us a reasonable service, would work upon us by a reasonable operation. God therefore works by way of a spiritual illumination of the understanding, in propounding the creature's happiness by arguments and reasons, and in a way of a spiritual impression upon the will, moving it sweetly to the embracing that happiness, and the means to it which he does propose; and indeed without this work preceding, the motion of the will could never be regular.

God does this by a double work.

1. Upon the understanding.
2. Upon the will.

1. Upon the understanding. The opening the eyes precedes the conversion from darkness to light, in God's operation as well as in the apostles' commission, [Acts xxvi. 18](#). The first appearance of life, when God raises the soul, is in the clearness and distinctness of its knowledge of God, [Hos. vi 2, 3](#). And the apostle, in his exhortation to the Romans, tells them the way for the transformation of their souls was by the renewing of their minds: 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds,' [Rom. xii. '2](#). The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawning at the day, before the heat of the sun be felt. As the action of our sense is to sensible objects, so is that of our soul to spiritual. Our eye first sees an object before our hearts desire it, or our members move to it; so there is an apprehension of the goodness of the thing proposed, before there be any motion of our wills to it; so God begins his work in our minds, and terminates it in our wills. In regard of this, as a state of nature is set forth under the term of darkness, so a state of grace is often termed light, that being the first work in the new creation, as it was the first word of command in the old, 'Let there be light,' [2 Cor. iv. 6](#), [Col. iii. 10](#), and is therefore called a renewing 'in knowledge,' or unto knowledge or acknowledgement, "anakainoumenon eis epignosin". If you consider the Scripture, you will find most of the terms whereby this is set forth to us have relation to the understanding. The gospel itself is called knowledge, [Luke i. 77](#), wisdom, [1 Cor. i. 30](#). What faculty in man is appointed for the apprehending of a science to gain wisdom, but the understanding? That whereby we receive the gospel is called 'the spirit of the mind,' 'the eyes of the understanding' and 'sight,' which is put before believing: [John vi. 40](#), 'Every one which sees the Son, and believes on him.' The work of grace is called 'revelation,' [Gal. i. 16](#), 'illumination,' [Eph. i. 18](#), 'translation from darkness to light,' 'opening the heart.' The action of our minds being enlightened, is called 'comprehending,' [Eph. iii. 18](#), and 'knowledge,' [2 Peter i. 2](#). All respect the understanding as the original wheel which God primarily sets in order, from whence he does influence secondarily all the other faculties which depend upon its guidance, God preserving hereby the order which he instituted in nature. Therefore, when the understanding savingly apprehends the deformity of sin, the will must needs hate it; when it apprehends the mercy of God, and the beauty of holiness, the will must needs love him, and the higher the degrees of this saving illumination are in the mind, the stronger and firmer are the habits and acts of grace in the will. This illuminative act of the Spirit is before, *prior natura*, the other of inclining the will, for the understanding is first exercised about the word, as *verum*, true, before the will is concerned in it as good. The understanding takes in the light of the gospel, which, by the working of the Spirit, is reflected upon the will, whereby it is changed into the image of Christ, whose gospel it is: [2 Cor. iii. 18](#), 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image.' The first act is of

the mind, which is the eye of the soul; where the apostle intimates, that the whole progress, as well as the first change, is wrought in this manner.

This is wrought,

1. By removing the indisposition and prejudices which naturally are in the mind. As a wise physician which orders his medicines for the removing of the principal humour. Chains of darkness must be broken, films upon the eye must be removed, which hinder the act of vision; for what the eye is to the body, that the understanding is to the soul. The darkness of ignorance is promised in the covenant to be scattered: 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them,' [Jer. xxxi. 34](#). This being a law in the inward parts, the eye must be cleared to read it, as well as the heart cleansed to obey it. The object being spiritual, requires a spiritual disposition in the faculty for the reception of it. This is called in Scripture a giving eyes to see, and ears to hear, [Deut. xxix. 4](#), and the revealing things not only by the word, but by the Spirit, [1 Cor. ii. 10](#), which, in regard of rectifying the reasons and judgments of men, is called a 'spirit of judgment,' [Isa iv. 4](#), 'and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof; by the spirit of judgment. and the spirit of burning:' a spirit of judgment, as it is light in the understanding, removing the darkness, a spirit of burning, as it is heat in the heart, thawing the hardness. It reduces the mind into a right order, and teaches it to judge between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, the want of which is the cause of sin; whence sins are called "agnoemata", [Heb. ix. 7](#), errors, as arising from error in judgment. Since the mind is hued with fogs, and incapable to perceive the splendour of divine truths, God acts upon the mind by an inward virtue, causing the word proposed to be mixed with an act of faith, which he begets in the soul, whereby it apprehends the excellency of that state presented to it in the gospel. As there is a manifestation of his name in the word, so there is an operation of his grace, an internal teaching by God, as well as an external by the gospel; the proposal of the word by man, the opening and fitting the heart by God: [John vi. 45](#), 'Every man that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me'. Christ taught all by his ministry, the Father only some by his Spirit. Learning of God goes before coming to Christ, and those two acts are plainly distinguished: [Isa. vi. 9, 10](#), 'Hear and not understand.' The lock of their minds was to be opened, as well as that of their ears; the prophet's voice could unlock the one, the Spirit only had the key of the other. Men may enlighten as moral causes, God only as the efficient cause, to root out the inward indisposition. The Spirit also removes the prejudices against Christ as undesirable, against holiness as troublesome, takes down the strength of corrupt reasonings, pulls down those idols in the mind and false notions of happiness, out-reasons men out of their inward thoughts of a happiness in sensual pleasures, pride of life, mammon of honour or wealth, which are the root of our spiritual disease, and first to be cured. In this there is a manifest difference between the working of Satan and the operation of God; he sets his battery against the affections, because the entry is there easiest; God breaks in upon the understanding, which, being

the chief fort, will quickly be a means to reduce the lesser citadels. And when the work begins in removing the blindness, it is the way to a true conversion; when it begins only in the affections, it is a prognostic of a quick starting aside. In an outward exhortation, God acts suitably to our nature, since we are endued with understanding and will; but in acting upon us within, he does remedy the vice of our nature. since our reason and will are corrupted.

(2.) It is wrought by bringing the mind and the object close together. Sight is produced in a blind man by drawing off the scales from his eyes, and the recourse of spirits to the eye necessary for sight; besides this, there must be outward light, and objects coloured by that light; and from the eye so disposed within, and the thing discovered without, arises the action of sight. So from the preparation of the understanding, and the application of the object, arises this action of spiritual vision. There is a double opening, one of the gospel, the other of the understanding; our Saviour did both, he 'opened the Scriptures,' [Luke xxiv. 32](#), and 'opened their understandings,' ver. 45, that there might be a mutual entrance, that the word might dwell in their hearts, and their hearts have admission into the Word. The Spirit shows the great things of the gospel to the soul: [John xi. 14](#), "anangelei", 'He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you,' not in general, but bring them near to them, to make them view 'and know the things that are freely given to them of God,' [1 Cor. ii. 12](#), the benefits of the death and resurrection of Christ. He repeats them again and again, that there may be an evidence in the mind that they are the royal gifts of God. There is a knowledge, before this work of the Spirit, but as of things at a distance. Many know the things proposed in the gospel, but they know it not as a glorious gospel, nor see the wonders in this law, till the Spirit brings that and the faculty close together. As a man may discern a statue or picture at a distance, but till the eye and the objects meet close together, it cannot discern the beautiful workmanship upon them with any affection to them. Not that a man knew nothing, or knows new reasons of those things which he knew before; but there is a nearer, and therefore clearer, representation of them, which is *demonstratio ostensiva*, whereby he knows them in another manner than he did before. As a man may know the promises before, but they were not brought so near to him as to taste them; taste being an addition to knowledge, whereby a man knows that sensibly which before he only knew notionally. It is one thing to know a mechanical instrument, and another to know it in the operation of it, when it is applied to its proper use. It is like a man that has his understanding more cleared by seeing mathematical demonstrations, and lines drawn, than by all the rules of art in his head.

(3.) By fixing the mind upon the subject so closely presented. The Spirit settles that light and the object so in the mind, that it can no more blow it out than puff out the sparklings of a diamond, or than an artist endued with the habit of some art can divest himself of his skill. Many men have some convictions of truth, but flashy and uncertain, and which slip from their minds. But when the Spirit opens the heart, it holds the object to the mind, and the mind to the object, starts one holy thought after another about the truth it has darted

in, makes the mind peer about it, and take notice of every lineament of that truth that we eye, and those thoughts lie down, rise up, and walk with us. When Lydia's heart was opened, she 'attended to the things spoken by Paul,' [Acts xvi. 14](#), her whole heart cleaved to them. In this respect the Spirit is a remembrancer, making the soul ponder and over again with all intensesness of mind the goodness and truth of those things in the gospel which are brought unto it, that the heart is, as Paul was, 'bound in spirit to Jerusalem,' [Acts xx. 22](#). The thoughts of that journey did so haunt him and follow him, as the shadow does the body, that no arguments of friends, nor fear of danger, could divert him; the soul is bound by them, one consideration overtaking another, and all at work beating upon the mind. Hence consideration is put before conversion: [Ezek. xviii. 28](#), 'Because he considers and turns away from all his transgressions.' And it is called the 'engrafted word,' fastened to the soul as a graft to the stock; when the heart is opened by the Spirit, the word is inserted in and bound to it, and at last the heart becomes one with the word, and grows up with it.

(4.) By bringing the soul to an actual reasoning and discourse upon the sight of the evidence. God convinces the judgment with reasons proper to evidence the truth and goodness of what he does propose, and that with pregnant and prevailing demonstrations, which give a competent satisfaction; therefore called the 'demonstration of the Spirit and power,' [1 Cor. ii. 4](#), that is, a spiritual and powerful demonstration. When the eye is opened, and the revelation made, and held close and fast to the soul with a divine demonstration, that this is the only means to elevate him to a high condition, and at last bring him to a blessed immortality, the understanding is moved to compare the force of those arguments, and consequently judges that true which before it counted false and foolishness, and comes by the help of this spiritual light to reason spiritually, and spiritually to discern the proposition made to it. It compares its natural state with the happy state offered to it, its own ignorance with that light, its own misery with that mercy. God will not have man, that is so far above a beast, do anything without reason; for this would be to do it brutishly, though the thing done were never so good, When men act as men, they follow the judgment of the best reason they can. And shall man, that was created a rational creature, be renewed without reason, when the very work is to advance him to the true state of a reasonable creature, and his reason is enlightened by the Spirit, that it may rightly judge of the demonstrative arguments it offers to him? Is there not as much reason for the guidance of the will in the highest concern, as for the conduct of it in affairs of a lower sphere? Man was first endued with reason, that he might rationally serve God; and his depraved reason is reformed, that he may rationally return to God. If, therefore, he act like a man in other things, he does not surely act like a brute in this; but the Spirit excites that reason he has enlightened to judge of those excellent things he does propose, and the strength of the arguments he backs them with, which are so clear and undeniable that they cannot be refused by a mind divested of those indispositions which drew out before a contempt of them. The change in the will being

an election and choice, cannot be made without convincing and satisfying reasons which induce it to that choice, and justify the election it has made. That can hardly be called faith, when a man believes that which he does not think upon the highest reason was his duty to believe. And indeed what man is there that cannot allege some reason why he is induced to this or that act? God moves men by presenting things to the understanding under the notion of good, honest, profitable; and when the understanding is enlightened to judge of things in some measure under the same notion that God proposes them, a man's own reason cannot but upon a view of them assent unto them, and that assent is followed with a change, according to the degrees of that illumination, if it be a saving one. Upon this account that our own reason is excited to judge of the proposal, our faith can no more be said to be a human faith, or the work to proceed from our own power, than it can be said to be sensitive because it comes by hearing; for though faith depends upon hearing and reasoning, as upon natural powers, yet the light whereby the faculties are acted is wholly supernatural, and from the Spirit of God.

(5.) Hence follows a full conviction of the soul. Both the knowledge of its own misery, and the amiableness of the gospel offer, whence issues a weariness under the one and desires for the other. By this enlightening, the soul sees sin in its empire, God in his wrath, Satan in his tyranny, and the hardness of the stone within him; he sees the law accusing, sin triumphing, heaven shut and hell open, God ready to judge him, and his soul every way deplorable. He sees also in the gospel how Christ has expiated sin, answered the demands of the law, stills the clamours of conscience, satisfied the justice of God by bearing his wrath; hereupon the soul closes with Christ, and is born again. Here are heaps of sin that cannot be numbered, on the other side are riches of mercy that cannot be reckoned, there is sin to damn, here is a Christ to save; heaven and hell, sin and Christ, damnation and salvation, are presented in their proper colours, and pressed upon the understanding; which beholds all by a clear light. And thus, by the illuminative virtue of the Spirit, the soul is laid at God's foot in a sense of its misery, and then drawn into Christ's arms by a sense of his grace. This is wrought by a connective persuasion, for so the word "elegchein" signifies, [John xvi. 8](#), which causes both a sight of sin and a sense of righteousness, and produces a full assent in the understanding.

2. The next faculty wrought upon is the will. The will is inclined, as well as the understanding enlightened, whereby spiritual things are approved with a spiritual affection, the same hand that darts light into the mind, puts heat into the will. After the act of understanding has preceded in a serious consideration, and thorough conviction, the act of the will, by virtue of the same Spirit, follows in a delightful motion to the object proposed to it; it is conducted by light, and spirited by love; the understanding hands the object to the will, as necessary to be embraced, and the arms of the will are opened to receive it, as the eyes of the mind are to behold it.

For the understanding of this, take these propositions.

Prop. 1. There seems to me to be an immediate supernatural work upon the will, as well as upon the understanding: not that the understanding is only enlightened, and the will follows the dictate of that without any further touch of the Spirit upon it; but the will, as it is the will, and therefore cannot be forced, there is need of a moral cause which may determine it according to its nature, and draw it by the cords of a man. When a master instructs a youth in his trade, he does it by arguments morally; when he holds his hand with the instrument in it, and directs the motion, he acts physically; so does the Spirit exhort us to spiritual motion, telling us inwardly which is the way, that we may walk in it, and take our wills by the hand, as it were, and lead them in the way they are to go. A nurse's tongue and exhortation is not enough to make a child to go, because of the weakness of its limbs; nor the light in the understanding sufficient to move the will, wherein there is an habitual weakness and contradiction. How did God work up the wills of the Egyptians to lend their jewels to the Israelites, but by some immediate touch. Their reason might have furnished them with many more arguments against it than it could for it. They knew the Israelites had been highly injured, and that very lately, too; that they could not but have a deep sense of their oppression, and intentions of revenge, as far as their power extended. They knew that the Israelites prepared for flight, and might more than conjecture that they intended never to return or send their jewels to them; for what need had they of so many goods barely to sacrifice in the wilderness? How were their wills thus banded against so many arguments against this action, and without any strong reasons to move them to consent to such a desire of the Israelites? How must this be but by the efficacious power of God, not forcing their wills, but taming their fierceness, softening them by a secret instinct, and exciting them to a grant of the Israelites' request? The apostle says, God 'gives to will.' If there were not a particular act upon the will, it had better been said, God gives to understand and know, and man to will and do. After the evidence set up in the understanding, there is a secret touch upon the will, opening and enlarging it to run the way that is proposed in an excellent and charming manner. As the power of God raises every part of Christ, so the same power raises every faculty of the soul; it was also a physical power, since mere exhortation would never have effected it.

(1.) The Scripture intimates this in the terms whereby it signifies this work to us, as creation, resurrection, regeneration, new birth, all which denote some physical operation distinct in each faculty in the new creation, as there was in the first; not only the law in the mind to direct, but the heart of flesh to comply, is God's act. The fleshy heart is wrought by him, as well as the knowledge of the mind lighted by him. In generation something is removed, another thing introduced; in regeneration then of the will, there is consonant to that an eradication of corrupt habits, and an implantation of gracious ones. It is called a 'giving a heart,' a 'circumcision of the heart to love God,' [Deut. xxx. 6](#). Love is an act of the

will, though it supposes a knowledge of the amiable oldest in the understanding. If faith be principally in the will, as I think it is, as to consent; and the words *leaning, resting, coming* rather note an act of the will than an act of the understanding; there is then an operation of God upon the subject, viz. the will, in the implanting of it.

(2.) The will is corrupted as well as the understanding. The works of the flesh issue from both; if the corruption were only in the understanding, then that being removed, the will would be regenerated. As in a watch, if the fault be only in one wheel, that being mended, the whole frame is rectified; but if there be a flaw in all, the mending of one, though the principal one, which moves the rest, will not set every wheel right, without a particular application of art to restore them to their due frame. Was not original righteousness subjectively in the will as well as in the mind? Did not a stoutness in the will succeed in the place of that righteousness, as well as darkness in the place of light? Must not there then be a habit of mollifying grace bestowed upon the one as well as a habit of enlightening truth set up in the other; an inclination to good in the will, and an aversion from evil, as well as the knowledge of both? The corrupt proneness in the will is the cause that it is easily excited to evil by the persuasion of the devil and the world; and is there not need of an inward rectitude in the will to bias it to a free embracing and close adherence to the good proposed to it by God, that his grace may be efficacious in every part? This work is a quickening a man under a universal spiritual death; the will was dead, as well as the mind dark, which must have life instead of its deadness, as the other has light instead of its darkness; and if they be two distinct faculties, then there are two distinct acts of the Spirit, though they depend one upon another. There is no less power requisite to make us spiritually willing than to make us spiritually knowing, since the corrupt habits in our wills are rather stronger than the prejudices in our understandings; therefore there seems to be a distinct act in removing the resistance from the one as well as expelling the darkness from the other. As the Spirit takes away the wisdom that was sensual, earthly, and devilish, so it divests the will of that disposition whereby it was enamoured on that devilish wisdom of the flesh, and makes it willing to cut off the right hand and right eye, to deny sin, which is the very self, and engage in an irreconcilable quarrel against all that which engrossed its choicest affections..

(3.) If the understanding has such a power, by virtue of its illumination, without an act also of the Spirit upon the will, and a particular application of the understanding to the will, and the will to the understanding, why did not Adam's will follow his understanding? His understanding was clear, without darkness; his affections first made the rebellion; sense was the leader, and the will the follower. Eve's understanding was not silent under the temptation of Satan, her knowledge was actuated in that speech, 'God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die,' *Gen. iii. 3*. She cites the word, her understanding must needs concur with it, unless it were corrupted and darkened before the fall. Where lay the resistance? In the affections, and the will which sided with them. Why may not the will,

possessed with those evil habits, resist the understanding imperfectly restored to its primitive light, as well as Adam's will did where there was no scale or film upon the eye of his soul? And likely his affections had kept their due order, if the will had preserved its due dependence upon reason, and its sovereignty over the sensitive part. Do we not find that our wills are oftener in contradiction to the true sentiments of our understanding, and in conjunction with the affections, than in a due subordination to the one and commanding over the other? Is it not frequently seen that men of much light, knowledge, and gifts of reason, answer not the end of that illumination, and are without a will to turn to God? Besides, since corruption came in by the way of the affections, when the understanding was clear, how can regeneration of the will come in by the illumination of the understanding, without a particular operation upon the will and affections? If it be said, the will follows the dictate of the understanding, why did it not so in Adam? If we were perfectly restored, as Adam was in innocence, without the grace of God in our wills, as well as light in our understandings, we were not like to keep up in due order.

(4.) God in his other creatures gives not only a light and fancy in nature, but endues them with such principles that incline them to their motion, as connatural to them. Why then, shall we not think, since the will is an habitual power, that when the will is moved to supernatural ends, it is endued with such a supernatural habit, whereby it may be sweetly and readily moved to the chief good as its proper object? Are there not corrupt habits in the will, which the Scripture calls 'lusts,' and 'the works of the flesh,' [Gal. v. 19-21](#), which the Spirit mortifies as well as those of the mind? Why not, then, gracious habits set up in the room of the other in this faculty as well as in the other?

(5.) If there were not a physical operation and habits in the will, what would become of infants, who cannot in that state be renewed without such a kind of working? They are not capable of moral exhortation, we cannot conceive any other way the Spirit has to work upon them, but by such a physical operation, putting habits into their wills, whereby they are renewed and sanctified; they are capable of the habit, though not of the act. We never find our Saviour spending any exhortations upon infants, but he took them in his arms and blessed them, and told us that of such is the kingdom of heaven; and if the kingdom of heaven be of such, there is some operation upon them different from this method of working only upon their understanding.

(6.) If there were not some operation of the Spirit upon our wills, regeneration and conversion would be more our work than God's. If the Spirit terminates his working only upon the understanding, and the will be moved by the understanding alone, without any conjunction of the Spirit in the work upon the will, then the Spirit does not immediately concur to the chiefest part of regeneration, but as it illuminates the mind; for the chief part of renewing grace is in the will; so it would be more our work than God's, if the moral only were his, and the physical operation only ours. It was in a less affair than this, wherein

David blessed God for the people's willingness, offering so freely, acknowledging it indeed the people's act, but by God's overruling their wills, [1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14](#).

(7.) God is all in all in glory: [1 Cor. xv. 28](#), 'When Christ shall have delivered the kingdom to his Father, God then shall be all in all,' all in their understandings, all in their wills; he shall be the immediate cause of all things, and govern and dispose all things by himself, and for himself; binding the souls of all the glorified by everlasting ligatures to himself; all in all to the glorified, all light in their understanding, all love and delight in their will, objectively, efficiently. What efficacy he has in glory, shall we deny him in grace in every particular faculty?

Prop. 2. Yet this work, though immediate, is not compulsive and by force. It is a contradiction for the will to be moved unwillingly, any force upon it destroys the nature of it; if it be forced, it ceases to be will. It is not forced, because it is according to reason, and the natural motion of the creature; the understanding proposing, and the will moved to an embracing; the understanding going before with light, the will following after with love. The liberty of the will consists in following the guidance of reason; to have a liberty to go against it, is the greatest misery of the creature. That is properly constraint, when we are compelled to work contrary to the natural way of working; there is no constraint by force, but there is a kind of a constraint by love, because the Spirit accompanies this operation with so much efficacy, that instead of that sadness we should have in a thing we were forced unto, there is an unspeakable joy and contentment in the soul; it not being possible to taste so much of the love of God, to be delivered from so fearful a condemnation, to be brought to so glorious a hope, without being seized upon with much pleasure and delight. God changes the inclination of the will, but does not force it against its inclination; the will, being a rational faculty, cannot be wrought upon but rationally. Since the main work consists in faith and love, it is impossible there can be any force; no man can be forced to believe against his reason, or love against his will, or desire against his inclination. Belief is wrought by persuasion; no man can be persuaded by force. It cannot be conceived, that the will should will against the will. No man can be happy against his will, all happiness consisting in a suitability of the object to the faculty; those things that in themselves are the greatest pleasures of the world, if they please not a man, cannot confer any happiness upon him. The Spirit never works thus, because 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' [2 Cor. iii. 17](#); he destroys not the liberty, but reduces it to will more nobly than before. Besides, the liberty of the will does not stand in indifference to this or that thing, for then the will would lose its liberty every time it has determined itself to any one thing, because after the determination it would be no longer indifferent to the other. But the liberty of the will consists in being carried out according to the dictate of the practical judgment, and not by a blind instinct. God does not deal with us as stones and logs, or slaves, whom the whip makes to do that which they hate in their hearts; but conducts us in ways agreeable to our nature; he calls, saying, 'Seek you

my face;' and inclines the will to answer, 'Thy face, Lord, I will seek,' Ps. xxvoo. 8. That God who knows how to make a will with a principle of freedom, knows how to work upon the will, without entrenching upon, or altering the essential privilege he bestowed upon it; he that formed us, as a potter does his vessel, knows very well the handles whereby he may take hold of us, without making any breach in our nature.

Prop. 3. It is free and gentle. A constraint, not by force, but love, which is not an extrinsic force, but intrinsic and pleasant to the will; he bends the creature so, that at the very instant wherein the will is savingly wrought upon, it delightfully consents to its own happiness; he draws by the cords of a man, and by a secret touch upon the will makes it willing to be drawn, and moves it upon its own hinges. It is sweet and alluring; the Spirit of grace is called 'the oil of gladness;' it is a delightful and ready motion which it causes in the will, it is a sweet efficacy, and an efficacious sweetness. At what time God does savingly work upon the will, to draw the soul from sin and the world to himself, it does with the greatest willingness, freedom, and delight follow after God, turn to him, close with him, and cleave to him, with all the heart, and with purpose never to depart from him: [Cant. i. 4](#), 'Draw me, and we will run after thee.' Drawing signifies the efficacious power of grace; running signifies the delightful motion of grace; the will is drawn, as if it would not come; it comes, as if it were not drawn. His grace is so sweet and so strong, that he neither wrongs the liberty of his creature, nor does prejudice his absolute power. As God moves necessary causes, necessarily; contingent causes, contingently; so he moves free agents freely, without offering violence to their natures. The Spirit glides into the heart by the sweet illapses of grace, and victoriously allures the soul: [Hosea ii. 14](#), 'I will allure her, and speak to her heart;' not by crossing, but changing the inclination, by the all-conquering and alluring charms of love, as a man does that person whom he intends for his spouse; for to that he alludes, because in the latter part of the chapter, he speaks of the consummation of his marriage with the church: ver. 16, 'In that day thou shalt call me Ishi.' In what day? In the day that he should allure her, and speak to her heart. God puts on the deportment of a lover in changing the frame of the will. The Spirit is as one that leads the way into truth (the Spirit 'shall guide you, "hodegesei", into all truth,' [John xvi. 13](#)); not drags; he opens the heart, not by a forcible entry, but as a key that fits every ward in the lock. The attraction of the will is much like that of iron by the loadstone, which had no motion of itself till the powerful emissions of the loadstone's virtue reached it, and then it seems to move with a kind of voluntariness; there is no force used, but a delicious virtue emitted

which does, as it were, both persuade and enable it to join itself to its beloved attracter. There is a secret virtue communicated by God, which, as soon as it touches the soul, puts life and delightful motion into it, which before lay like a log. It embraces Christ as its portion, and passes a decree that it will keep his words: [Ps. cxix. 67](#), 'Thou art my portion, O Lord. I have said that I will keep thy words.'

Prop. 4. It is insuperably victorious. What the mouth of God speaks, what his will purposes, his hand does fulfil, [1 Kings viii. 24](#). It is not a faint and languishing impression, but a reviving, sprightly, and victorious touch. As the demonstration of the Spirit is clear and undeniable, so the power of the Spirit is sweet and irresistible; both are joined, [1 Cor. ii. 4](#). An inexpressible sweetness allures the soul, and an unconquerable power draws the soul; there are clear demonstrations, charming persuasions, and invincible efficacy combined together in the work. He leaves not the will in indifference. If God were the author of faith only by putting the will into an indifference, though it be determined by its own proper liberty, why may not he also be said to be the author of unbelief, if by the same liberty of this indifference it be determined to reject the gospel? For in the same manner God is author of one motion of the will as well as of the other, if he does no more than leave the will in an *aequilibrium*. This irresistibleness takes not away the liberty of the will. Our Saviour's obedience was free and voluntary, yet necessary and irresistible. He could not sin in regard of the hypostatical union, yet he had a greater aversion to sin than all the angels in heaven. Is not God freely and voluntarily good, yet necessarily so? He cannot be otherwise than good, he will not be otherwise than good. So the will is irresistibly drawn, and yet does freely come to its own happiness. The soul is brought over to God, and adheres to him, not by a necessity of compulsion, but of immutability. As the angels necessarily obey God, not by compulsion, but from an immutable love. A sinner is necessarily a servant to sin, a regenerate man necessarily a servant to God; both by a kind of necessity of nature. Our main business, then, is to see what new enlightenings there are in our minds by the Spirit in the gospel, what tastes and relishes we have of divine truths, how our wills are allured to a sincere and close compliance with the proposals of God in the gospel, what vigour is in them. This is God's method, to work first upon the understanding, then upon the will. That work which begins first in the affections, without light dawning and breaking in upon the mind, and growing up by consideration and inquiries into the gospel is to be suspected, and is not like to be durable.

This is the Scripture method, and every regenerate person may find it more or less in himself.

V. The use is,

1. For instruction.

(1.) If God alone be the author and efficient of the new birth, then it does instruct us how insufficient a good education of itself is to produce this work in the soul, and how unfit to be rested on, without a further work. I doubt many may rest upon a religious education, without searching and inquiring into themselves what further work of God has been wrought upon them. God has entrusted parents with a power of instructing their children, but reserves the power of renewing grace to himself. If parents may set the object before them, God only can give them a spiritual eye to discern it; if they may inform the understanding, a divine

touch only can bend the will; if they may lay the wood of spiritual lessons together, yet the fire to kindle them in the heart, and consume the lusts, must descend from heaven. Education may correct, but not extirpate the malignity of nature; good instruction, meeting with an orderly constitution, may sow the seeds of moral virtue, and restrain natural corruption, but not weed that out of our nature, or plant the root of grace, any more than the skilful management of a beast can change its natural inclination, though it may curb it. The folly bound up in the heart of a child is too strong for the wisdom of man, and is wholly to be expelled by the wisdom which comes down from heaven, set up in the heart by Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father. The little stars of precepts glittering in the mind, cannot make the young plants sprout up with their heads towards heaven, without the influence of the sun. Christ, the Sun of righteousness, fixed in the soul by the Spirit, can do more than all the stars of moral instructions in the world. Timothy had as religious instruction from his religious mother and grandmother as any in the world, both being believers, [2 Tim. i. 5](#), yet Paul calls him his 'own son in the faith,' [1 Tim. i. 2](#), as having 'begotten him in the gospel.' Those instructions did not beget him, though they might facilitate the evangelical work which was wrought by the gospel in Paul's ministry. Therefore the apostle manifestly distinguishes between instructors and fathers: [1 Cor. in 15](#), 'Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.' He distinguishes their instructions from Christ, the efficient cause, and himself through the gospel, the instrumental cause. Yet such instruction is not to be neglected when children are capable; God may set home that by the gospel, which has been sucked in in younger years. Men may as well turn their backs upon the hearing the word, because it is insufficient without the operation of the almighty grace. Instruction and prayer should go hand in hand together; but take heed of resting upon a good education.

(2.) It instructs us that regeneration does not depend merely upon the word, if God alone be the efficient cause of it. It depends upon the inward efficacy of the Spirit. Had it depended upon the power of the apostles, or the outward demonstration of that word, they would have converted all that they had preached to, they would not have suffered any to have remained obstinate against the gospel: charity would have obliged them to the exercise of their power; and their power would have made their charity effectual. As God does seldom work without means, so means can never work without God. David had the law of God in his hand, but could not learn it without God's teaching; therefore he prays, [Ps. lxxxvi. 11](#), 'Teach me thy way, O Lord: I will walk in thy truth.' And in many places of the 119th Psalm he takes notice, that all spiritual knowledge comes from God, though in the way of his precepts: ver. 98 'Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies'; and ver. 104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding.' While we use the means, our eye should be upon God. Thomas had his fingers upon our Saviour's wounds, but his thoughts upon Christ's divinity: 'My Lord, and my God.' Food maintains the body, but by virtue of

the soul animating it, and enabling it to concoct that food. The Spirit of God is the soul of the gospel, and of all means, to make them efficacious; and with this power of the Spirit the weakest means can effect more than the greatest means without it, which, indeed, can produce little or nothing. Peter's sermon, [Acts ii.](#), was but short, but improved by the Spirit to the conversion of three thousand souls. Means can do nothing of themselves to change the heart. When the disciples had two ordinances representing the death of Christ, i. e. the Passover and the Lord's supper, pride, the great enemy to regeneration, put up its head above water; they quarrelled 'who should be greatest,' [Luke xxii. 24.](#)

(3.) There is no reason to confide in our own purposes and resolutions, or any strength of our own, if God alone be the efficient cause of regeneration; for it depends not upon our resolves without the grace of God. Satan fears not our vows; he knows, without grace they are but as light feathers, easily to be puffed away by him; but sparks, which, without his breath, the flood of corruption in our souls would extinguish as soon as they begin to appear. How can our resolves without grace renew us, when Peter's resolve, with his inherent grace, could not defend him? who, after his boasting, when certainly he sincerely meant what he said, fell so shamefully, that he stood in need of a new conversion. How soon do we, after a transient awakening fall to nodding in our spiritual sleep? If grace be not present with us to cure our lethargy, our purposes are as empty sails hoisted by us, the breath of the Spirit only fills with a full gale for motion. We can never 'steadfastly look into heaven, and see the glory of God,' unless we be 'full of the Holy Ghost,' [Acts vii. 55.](#) Stephen's eye would have been twinkling, had not the divine Spirit fixed it. How soon will a slight blast of a temptation shake a building, which has no other foundation but the moveable sand of our own purposes, when as slight a temptation shook the image of God out of Adam with all its brightness, who was built with God's own hand, with a power also to keep himself! Adam could not be without purposes of obedience when he heard the precept, yet with a slender temptation came tumbling to the dust, and fell as low as hell. A vain confidence in our own resolutions is so far from being a cause of this spiritual birth, that it is rather a hindrance, and part of the pride of nature, that must be demolished, and to be reckoned as one of the eldest things among these old things that are to pass away. Trust not, therefore, to yourselves; look up daily for the divine influence; lean not to your own understanding, though in part enlightened; confide not in your own wills, though in part inclined to the best things, pursue nothing in your own strength.

(4.) It is an injury to God to associate any thing with him in this work, which he challenges as his own production. Would it not be a disparagement to deny him the sole efficiency in one of the noblest works of his wisdom and holiness? That he who wrought the comely fabric of the first creation by his power and wisdom, without a co-partner, or deputing any of the highest angels to bring the world into form, should not have the honour of a work which bears the stamp of a higher wisdom and power than the whole creation! That he who

contrived the models of the little creatures in the world, should leave this to the foolish contrivance of any creature! Why should we imagine that the divine image, upon whom the highest blessedness of the creature depends, should be of so little value in the judgment of God's infinite wisdom, as to be turned over from the care of so wise a workman, to the capriciousness of a light and uncertain will, more blind and mutable than Fortune the heathen goddess? It is more (we have heard) to frame so excellent a piece as the new creature is, out of the rubbish of sin, than to frame the whole celestial and elementary world out of a rude mass of matter; since there is a greater gulf to be shot between corruption and grace than between nothing and the beautiful structure of heaven and earth; and, therefore, we may less disparage him, in denying him the title of creator of the world, than that of the creator of a new heart, since he has promised by his own mouth to do it with his own hand. The apostle cannot be charged with ignorance, but knew what he said in that comprehensive thanksgiving for 'all spiritual blessings in Christ;' if all, then one of the highest, the new creation, is not intended to be left out of the roll of spiritual blessings, associating none with God, as the principal, but Christ as the Mediator, conveying this grace by his Spirit, according to the orders of the Father: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,' [Eph. i. 3](#).

(5.) See from hence how excellent a thing it is to be born again, if God be the sole efficient of it! Whatsoever God is the author of in his ordinary works, is excellent in its kind, they are all the effects of his will; this is an effect of his gracious will. Other generations are by the will of man, wherein the will of God concurs with them; this is solely by the will of God, without any concurrence of the will of man in the first work, called therefore by way of excellency, 'the faith of the operation of God,' [Col. ii. 12](#), not a gift conveyed by angels, but his Spirit. A grain of grace of God's planting is more worth than millions of gold of man's getting; a more worthy gift than all the gold of Ophir, which God gives to men by their industry, who shall never see his face; but this by his own Spirit in order to glory. It is a royal gift he reserves in his own hands, to bestow upon those that were his favourites in his eternal purposes; it grows not in every man's ground, neither is it sown in every man's field. The soul is more excellent than the body, not only in respect of its nature, but in respect of its immediate author. God is called particularly, 'The Father of spirits,' not of bodies, though he is so; but in the production of bodies he acts by the hand of nature, in the production of the soul by his own hand. In that work he acts by the intervention of second causes; in this, without serving himself of any other efficient cause but his own will. If the soul, as being the only work of God, is therefore more excellent, then certainly a new-born soul is more excellent than anything in the world, in regard God is the author of it in a more peculiar manner, by the operation of his choicest affections.

(6.) If God be the efficient of regeneration, then there is a necessity of the influence of God in all the progress of grace. It is yet imperfect, the same hand that planted it must also

water and dress it. There is a tough sinew left in man's will, which makes him halt after he has the new name of Israel put upon him, a weakness of faith, a coldness of love, a faintness of zeal. What he is the creator of, is nursed by his providence; what he is the new creator of, is fostered by a succession of grace. The scripture therefore appropriates all to him: he is the God that calls us, the God that anoints us, the God that carries us, the God that establishes us, the God that keeps us, and the God that perfects us. He is the author of grace in its first issue, its fruitful sproutings, its delicious ripenings, it depends upon him in creation, preservation, augmentation, as well as natural things depend upon him in all their progressive motions, from one degree to another, as the author of nature. When nature was most unspotted, grace was necessary to preserve and fix it in that state. Adam needed the assistance of grace with the embellishments of nature. The same power that inspires us with life, inspires us with a perpetual continuation of it. If the tide that turns the stream of the river desert it, and return to its own channel, the river will return to its natural current. Our hearts will decline, our life languish, unless fed by that supernatural efficacy which did first produce it. The plants cannot grow merely from their own internal form, nor trees bring forth their pleasant fruits without the influence of rain and sun, feeding and hatching their innate spirits, and drawing them out to make a show of themselves in flowers and fruits; and when they are brought forth, they stand in need of the same rain to fill them, the same sun to ripen them.

(7.) If God be the efficient, &c., we see whither we are to have recourse in all the exigencies of the new creature, to whom, but to the author of those beginnings of eternal life! God is all, in all parts of this glorious work: 'The God of all grace, who has called us into his eternal glory, make you perfect, strengthen, establish, settle you,' &c., [1 Peter v. 10](#). There is need of preserving, strengthening, increasing, quickening, and perfecting grace.

These you need, and these must be sought, and will be had from the same goodness and power by which you were new born.

[1.] Preserving grace.

First, God only can give it. There is a necessity of it; as God rears it, so he only can keep it from pining away. Plants will wither if the rain do not descend; the flame will be extinguished if fuel be not added. There is as much a necessity of a constant influence to keep up this new nature, as there is of the sun to preserve the horizon from that darkness which would invade it upon the turning its face to other parts of the world. The perpetual duration of renewing grace is not essential to grace, for then Adam and the angels had stood by virtue of their grace, for nothing ever loses its essential property; but it is by an additional grace, distinct from the first grace wherein our regeneration does consist, as the preservation of the creatures in their natural beings is by an act of God, distinct from his creative act. The first grace God gives now is a bounty to his creatures, but it is further an obligation upon himself, not as it is grace, or as it is his own work, for Adam's grace which failed was brought

by his fingers, inspired by his breath, but as it is a new covenant grace which alters the condition of it. God's finger wrote the law in the heart, and his breath can only blow the dust off, that would fill the engraved letters.

Secondly, God will preserve it. Job would argue with God, and ask him, 'Is it good unto thee that thou should despise the work of thine hands?' [Job x. 3](#). Is it agreeable to his goodness and wisdom to slight and neglect the work of his own heart; not a fruit of his common liberality to the creation, but a choice fruit of his redeeming love? His common love, as he is the author of nature, preserves the old creation; much more his special love, as he is the author of the new nature, will preserve the new creation. His general goodness made the world, but his gracious goodness formed the soul; the one is more splendid than the other, therefore the effect more durable. Mercy compasses the godly about. [Ps. xxxii. 10](#), like bulwarks that surround a city for its defence, against the assaults of spiritual enemies. A higher providence attends man than other creatures, because he is of a more noble constitution; upon the same account a higher providence must attend the new creature, as being far more noble than mere man. God embraces all creatures in his arms with a common love as creatures, he lays the new begotten ones in his bosom by a special love. His power too is to be considered. He will not want a power to preserve that which he did not want power to new create. The power being the same that raised Christ from the dead, which raised any from their natural condition, will have the same issue, since it never suffered Christ to return to the grave again, neither will it suffer any new born soul to return to a spiritual death. Every new creature is the Father's by purpose, and by actual traction; they were his before they were Christ's. The Father draws them to Christ; and the power of Christ will be as eminent to preserve them, as the power of the Father was to draw them. Why were the creatures brought, by that instinct God put into them, into Noah's ark, but to be preserved from the destroying deluge? Why did he take pains to write the law anew in the heart, if he would suffer it to be dashed out again? If he would not preserve his own work, why did he not let the soul lie wallowing in its old filthiness, and forbear the expense of those fresh colours he has new drawn his image with? It seems to be a greater power to take off all that load of sin which lay upon you, than to preserve you from having so great a burden again upon you. It is not reasonable to think that God should be at so much cost, only to restore man to Adam's mutable condition, whereby to incur a greater condemnation.

[2.] Strengthening grace. This we need, as well as preserving grace. It is God that strengthens us in the inward man; by that strengthening grace the new creature can do all things, without it nothing. Through him we are more than conquerors over principalities and powers, [Rom. viii. 37, 38](#). Strength to mount up to heaven as an eagle, to run our race without weariness, to walk without fainting, to combat difficulties without sinking fears, is only to be had by waiting upon the Lord, who is the fountain whence all these flow, [Isa. xl. 31](#), and by his grace confers a supernatural fortitude: [Isa. xl. 31](#), 'But they that wait upon the

Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.' Look not therefore for strength in your new nature; look for it in God, in that Spirit which first renewed you, since that glorious power is imparted to strengthen you. which was at first employed to new-create you. This was the matter of the apostle's prayer for the Colossians, and this should be ours: [Col. i. 9, 11](#), 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.' There is much weakness in us, a medley of lusts, an army of enemies, but the way is open for us to that glorious power, to endue us with a new vigour, which first seized upon us with an insuperable efficacy, our shattered and weakened sins shall not be able to resist that glorious power by which they could not stand the shock of when they were in their full strength. 'God will be a sun and a shield,' [Ps. lxxxiv. 11](#), a sun to dispel our darkness, a shield to secure us from darts; a sun against the allurements of the world, defeating them by a charming light; a shield against the allurements of the world, overpowering them by an irresistible force; the sun that gave us life, the shield that secures our strength. The glorious power which we need in our progress lies in the same arm which wrought our deliverance, and from thence must be fetched. It is only by him that we have strength to tread down the wicked one's temptations; and those fiery darts are made as ashes under the soles of our feet, [Mal. iv. 8](#).

[3.] We need increasing grace; and that is from God. The increase depends upon him, as well as the first planting. When we want it, he is the fountain from whence we must draw it; so did the disciples, [Luke xvii. 5](#), 'Increase our faith,' or add to us faith, "prosthes hemin". Every new spring, fresh bud, spreading blossom, is an addition by his influence. When we have it, we must acknowledge his sole hand in it, so the apostle did when he saw the growth of the Thessalonian faith, and the abounding of their charity: [2 Thes. i. 3](#), 'We are bound to thank (eucharistein ofeilomen) God always for you, because that your faith grows exceedingly.' He did it by obligation: no such tie had lain upon him had God left them to increase it themselves. The new fruits you bear is from his new purging, as the first power to bear was from his planting, [John xv. 2](#). If you would thrive, it must not be by your own, but by the increases of God; 'God gives the increase,' both in the outward administration and inward operation of the gospel, [1 Cor. iii. 7](#). Faith, in every assent, is conducted by that power which first settled it in the heart, and without it cannot commence any higher degree. As every spark of spiritual life is by his kindling, so every sparkling of that spark is by his blowing. Look for it at God's hands, beg of him to write that law deeper, which his fingers first engraved in your hearts. It is God's being 'a dew to Israel' makes him grow up in beauty as 'the lily and the olive tree,' in strength 'cast out his roots as the cedars of Lebanon,' [Hosea xiv. 5-7](#). If you would grow up as calves of the stall, you must lie under the healing wings of the Sun of righteousness: [Mal. iv. 2](#), 'Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,' &c. That Sun which by his beams conveyed into you a spiritual life, can only by the same heat influence you to a taller growth. Every drop of the knowledge

of his will till you come to be filled, every mite of wisdom and spiritual understanding, is to be drawn from him only, [Col. i. 9](#), both the additions of knowledge and the deeper impressions and lively sproutings of what we know.

[4.] Quickening grace. This also we need. As our life, so the liveliness and activity of grace depends upon the divine influence; a divine motion is necessary to elevate our souls to those actions which are supernatural; our grace depends upon God in *actu secundo*, as well as *actu primo*. As God first puts a nature into creatures (in the exercise as well as the being) and then quickens them by his providential concurrence in those acts suitable to their nature, which acts are therefore natural to those creatures, so by a gracious concurrence he does quicken the new nature in the soul to the exerting of gracious operations, according to that nature he has endued it with. As he tunes the strings by his skill to fit them for a divine harmony, so he enlivens them by his touch to make what music he pleases; every heavenly prayer, every gracious groan, every start of spiritual affection, is from the Spirit tuning, quickening, assisting against infirmities and deadness. There must be a continued drawing to make a continued running. 'Draw us, and we will run after thee,' [Cant. i. 4](#). It was the church, the gracious church, the spouse and dove of Christ, yet sensible of her own inability to quicken her pace to new communion with Christ, without fresh communications first from him. There is a bias in the soul to direct it in a right motion; there must be a hand without to put it upon that motion; Christ must 'put his hand in at the hole of the door' before a lazy soul, though gracious, will stir at his call, [Cant. v. 3](#); or as a child, which has a principle of motion, must be assisted and quickened by the nurse before it can move a step. Grace is more prevalent to keep us from sin than excite us to holiness, yet neither can be done by it without new quickenings; our motion is in him and by him, as well as our life, spiritually as well as naturally [Acts xvii. 28](#), 'In him we live, move, and have our being;' the old stock must have continual supply. Without Christ we can do nothing, [John xv. 5](#); without him we cannot have grace in the plant, nor grace in the fruit. As the soul excites the spirits in the eye to an act of vision,—if they be not quickened by their governor, though things be before our eyes they see nothing,—so the Spirit of God excites, as it were, the spirits of grace to their particular acts, faith to apprehend and love to work. The goodness that made the promise guides the hand of the soul to fasten upon it: [Ps. cxix. 49](#), 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' As God makes the promises, so he makes the meeting between the soul and the promise; every motion proceeds from God's touch upon the heart enlarging it, therefore our dependence must be upon God's grace: [Ps. cxix. 32](#), 'I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' I will run, not by my own strength, but by the hand of God enlarging and enlivening my heart. Indeed, if God did not give to act as well as implant the habit, he would give no more to us in the new covenant than he gave to Adam in the old, who had a power to do, but not the act of doing; his power was from God, but the act of obedience depended upon

himself, and for want of actual obedience he fell. We see whence we must derive our quickenings; we want them because we expect them from the new nature in us, not from the author of that nature, and the concurrence of his grace with it, and depending upon habitual more than actual grace is the cause of our having many a slip. We are as dead lumps, notwithstanding all the grace we have, if God did not cause a free life to spring up in us by successive breathings.

[5.] Perfecting grace is only from God. He is the finisher of what he is the author of, [Heb. xii. 2](#), and in our spiritual warfare supplies us with new recruits, till the combat end in victory, and the victory in triumph. He will come 'as the former and the latter rain,' [Hosea vi. 3](#): as the former rain to open the womb of the earth, and the latter rain to ripen the fruits of the earth. As he has laid the foundation of mount Zion, so he will perform the whole work in it; he fulfils the work of faith with the same power wherewith he begins it, [2 Thes. i. 11](#). The power which caused the resurrection of Christ caused his ascension; he had his forty days upon the earth, after his resurrection, before he was taken up to glory. There is a continuance of a believer in the world after his resurrection from a spiritual death, but the same power which caused his spiritual resurrection will as surely cause his heavenly ascension. That arm that brought him out of Egypt will conduct him to the limits of Canaan, the flourishing pastures of the promised land. Grace is the first gift, glory is the latter; glory follows upon the heels of grace: 'He will give grace and glory,' [Ps. lxxxiv. 11](#). Grace to fit for glory, and glory to reward his own grace; all grace till it ends in glory. God must be sought and depended on for this; we cannot will our perfection without grace, as we cannot will our regeneration without grace; God gives the will, the progressive as well as the initial will. Then seek only to God, depend upon him only, for the warmth of his goodness, to bring those chickens to perfection which he has gathered under his wing; his affections are not tired, it is a pure disinterested love mingled with no defects; his wisdom and power is no less able to perfect than his love is to incite him to it.

Use 2. The second use is of comfort.

Is God the author of regeneration? He that is the God of all grace is the God of all comfort too. Where he is the one, he will be the other. As he creates the soul to good works, so he creates it to heavenly consolations. When God acts as a God of justice toward sinners, he appears as a terrible God in his punishments; when he acts towards saints as a God of grace, he appears as a comforting God, he fills the one with all terrors, prepares the other for all comforts; he calls you by a new creation into his eternal glory, and sends therefore some sparkles of glory into the soul here. Are you born of God? You approach in excellency as near to Christ as a creature's capacity will admit. Christ was his natural begotten son, believers his spiritually regenerated children. Christ is 'the first born,' but 'among many brethren,' [Rom. viii. 29](#), that Christ 'that sanctifies, and we that are sanctified, are all of one,' [Heb. ii. 11](#), of one nature, say some, of one Father, say others; therefore 'he is not ashamed

to call them brethren,' one nature does not so much make us brethren as one father. Christ was not regenerated, but generated, he stood not in need of the other, because the first generation failed not, neither could he, being God, he is the exact image of his Father's person, and so particularly of all his attributes, because he partakes of his essence. Believers are the living images of God's holiness, not partaking of all his attributes, but of that.

Particularly,

(1.) God will rejoice in his own work. If he rejoiced in the first planting of his image at the creation, he will no less rejoice in it at the restoration and with more gladness embrace the son that is returned from death to life by returning from his debauched course, than that son that remained with him all the while. Why does he renew the face of the earth by the mission of his Spirit, but that he may rejoice in his works? 'Thou sends forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renews the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works,' [Ps. civ. 30, 31](#). If God shall in time rejoice in the earth, wherein he had little joy after the creation of it, and soon repented of his work, he will rejoice in the noblest work, in the frame of his image, which, next to Christ, makes all other works of the lower creation pleasant to him. He 'creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy,' and he will rejoice in the new creation of his people, in the people he has new created, [Isa lxxv. 18, 19](#).

(2.) He will destroy all enemies to his own work. How will his love pierce into every part, and employ his power in destroying the enemies of his work; whip buyers and sellers out of his spiritual temple, cast out all their remaining rubbish; let not his house be always a den of thieves, that shall rob God of his glory, and his temple of its beauty! That God that can raise men five thousand years ago dead as easily as one dead the last minute, can remove all the bands of corruption, though never so strong. If he has raised you from death, he will lift you up from all the remainders of death; the grave-clothes which yet remain about you, shall be in time untied, as well as the soul unloosed from the principal bands of death. Though there be in you a 'spirit that lusts to envy,' as well as a spirit that lusts to love, yet 'God gives more grace,' [James iv. 5, a](#). Lusts will down, corruptions fall in time before his grace, darkness must hide its hated head, when that word breaks louder from his lips, 'Let there be light.' The promises of a thorough sanctification belong to you, as well as the promises of a perfect remission. If God be the teacher, no matter what the scholar is; if God be the workman, no matter what the matter is; if God be the guardian, no matter what the enemies are; nothing is too rugged for his skill, or too hard for his power.

(3.) He will order all things for the good of his own work. 'They shall not labour in vain; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord,' [Isa. lxxv. 23](#). He did not want grace to restore them, he will not want comforts to support them. Their very afflictions shall be ordered to preserve the work of his own heart in them; and while he prunes and cuts, he will purge away the luxuriant corruptions, that his vine may be more beautiful and delicious. And if

he does chasten you sharply, it is that you may be nearer 'partakers of his holiness,' [Heb. xii. 10.](#)

Use 3. The third use is of exhortation.

1. To the renewed.

(1.) Walk humbly. Swell not big, as if your own power had procured it, let not pride spread its sails in your souls. Consider, you are creatures still, though new creatures. As God put into you whatsoever you have of natural existence, so he has put into you whatsoever you have of spiritual; you are dust still by your natural creation, though new formed by the Spirit. There is nothing of grace, no act of grace, but you receive mediately or immediately from God. You opened not your own eyes, nor thrust back the lock of your own hearts, nor can call one spark of that spiritual life you have, your own creature; it moved not at your beck, obeyed not your orders; it is when God says, Go, that it goes, and, Do this and that, Settle upon this or that soul, and it does it. How humble should you be, since grace does nothing in any but by God's order, not your own. God works in us, we add nothing to God. The melted wax receives the stamp from the seal, but the wax adds nothing to the seal. 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' 'If thou did receive it, why dost thou boast as if thou had not received it?' [1 Cor. iv. 7.](#) Grace is God's communication to you, not yours to yourselves. What is received, is not your own work, but another's gift; were it desert, we had reason to boast; but being a gift, we have no reason to grow big. Lie therefore before him in your own nothingness. Renewing grace first lighted upon you when you were humble; and grace in its increase flourishes when the soul is in the same posture.

(2.) Ascribe all that you are, as renewed creatures, to God. Ascribe it wholly to him; let self rub off every filing of this gold from its own fingers. 'Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the praise,' [Ps. cxv. 1.](#) The repetition removes the glory far from themselves. If praise be comely for an upright person, it is most comely in the greatest cause that can happen to him, [Ps. xxxiii. 1.](#) Account yourselves therefore nothing, and God and grace all; and let no shootings be heard in your souls while God is rearing up the divine temple, but those of Grace! Grace! [Zech. iv. 7,](#) both in the foundation and superstructure, till he comes to the top stone. Your breathing after God is but the effect of his breathing after you; the moon has no light of herself, but what she receives from the sun; nor any creature a spark of grace, but what is derived from the Father of lights. God's purity is as the sun, your grace as a beam from that sun, not primitive in your nature, but derivative from God. Were it not from grace, Saul had never been Paul, nor Peter a penitent, nor Mary a convert, nor Zacchaeus a Christian, nor had thou ever been brought to the sweetness of a spiritual life, or advanced to the state and comforts of another world. Did you will to run till mercy moved your wills and spirited the feet of your souls? Your will, your race, was nothing; God's grace was all, [Rom ix. 16.](#) Was it not his word of command, Let there be life? Was it not his invincible power battered down the strongholds of sin? Oh seriously think,

O Christian, that dry and desert heart of thine could never have been mollified and watered by rocky nature, nor virtue ever bud and blossom in that barren soil, unless the soil were mended, as well as the plant fixed, by some powerful hand. Bless God, therefore, since had it not been for him, you had never been humbled, never been renewed, never reached so high as a holy desire, or a penitential tear, but lain till this day, and for ever, bemired in fallen nature.

That you may know what reason you have to bless God with the highest praises, consider,

[1.] What your obligation is, how great! What good would your creation have done you since your fall without a new creation by the same hand? It must have rendered you miserable without this, and could never have rendered you happy but by the intervention of this. Without this you might have been his sons and daughters by creation, and devils by corruption. The heathens were God's offspring, as they were rational creatures, [Acts xvii. 28](#), and the devil's children, as they were corrupt creatures. You might have had the image of God in a glimmering reason, without his image in a divine holiness. Was it not a greater obligation to restore that with kinder circumstances which you had wilfully thrown away, when it was in no wise due to you, than it was at first to bestow it? There was something like debt at first; supposing God would create a rational creature, integrity and innocence was naturally due to it, in regard of the holiness and wisdom of God, unless he would have been the author of the creature's sinfulness; but since that voluntary defection, the restoration was in no sort due, therefore the obligation greater. If God had created a thousand worlds, and given you the lordship of them for some millions of years, had this been such a kindness as to afford you a new nature, whereby you will be eternally happy in a likeness to God and enjoyment of him? As the work of redemption, so this of regeneration, darkens the glory of the work of creation; since more of grace, wisdom, power, holiness, are the springs of it, the obligation must be far greater; the difference is as great as between heaven and earth. Will you not bless God for making you creatures, for recovery from a fit of sickness? Is the obligation less in delivering you from a spiritual death? Is not the reason of blessing God greater for the second creation than the first, since it is the same skill adorns you with his image in the new creation, which beautified man with that image at the first?

[2.] Was there not as much unfitness in you as in the worst of men by nature? Not one good disposition grew upon nature, but all was the work of preventing grace. Could, then, the iron gates of your hearts fly open of themselves? Or could any else but a God break them open? Was not your nature carried as violently to sin as any, perhaps not into such brutish sins as others, yet more refined and devilish? If you did not launch out into the grossest sins, you owe your preservation to restraining grace. That Socrates was better and wiser than another, was from God, in the acknowledgement of a heathen, who says he was chosen to virtue, "Kata tou Theou cheirotonian", by the divine suffrage. Were your strings better? Sure they were of God's tuning. Man was not more unfit for a natural being before God created

him, than the best man in the world was for a spiritual being, till God wrought him with his own finger. Was not the worst in the world naturally as fit for it as yourselves? Did any better thing dwell in your flesh than in theirs, to give grace entertainment? Did not grace at first make its way, conquering, and to conquer, and not one blow struck by you to facilitate the victory? Nay, were you not so far from having a grain of grace by nature, that there was nothing but opposition and rebellion against the Author of it? Did you not want everything to make you lovely in God's eye? Nay, did you not hate him while he had a love of benevolence towards you? And have you not reason to bless him then, that he would not disdain to look upon you, such an impure and rebellious creature? Perhaps our case was the same with hers, [Hos. ii. 5](#), who said, 'I will go after my lovers.' She decreed to follow her idols, and was resolved not to be reclaimed; but God resolved otherwise, ver. 6, 7, who would not leave her till he had made her change her base and unworthy resolution for better: 'She shall say, I will return, &c.' And was it not a happy resolution in the divine breast, not to suffer you to run mad and furiously to bell? What an irrecoverable condition had you been in if God had not spoken a powerful word, 'Hitherto thou art gone, but no further shalt thou go!' Were you not once in your blood, and pitied by no eye, when God said, Live? And can you not wonder at the mercy of his lips, and raise your notes above an ordinary strain? Read over the records of the first work upon thy heart, and see if anything were written there with thy own finger. The very sense of thy own wretchedness was God's writing on thy heart; thou was weighed in the balances and found wanting; lighter than vanity, nothing of thy own to concur with God, but folly and misery.

[3.] If grace found thee unfit and rebellious, there could then be nothing of the least desert; and this should make you cast a wondering eye at the greatness of God's kindness. Man's voluntary defection, without any violence offered to him, had rendered him unworthy of any recovery; you did no more deserve it than the worst devil, who shall never have one line of it drawn upon him. Not one previous disposition, not one sigh or groan for it, could be discerned, much less the draught itself. Your true earnings were nothing but that death you lay under. The unloosing any band of it, or knocking off any fetter, was merely free grace. Is there not, then, reason to bless the Lord, when an undeserved power has been put forth to new create you, when a deserved power might have buried you for ever under your own ruins? Suppose you had been the most exact moralists in the world, the supernatural grace of the new birth could not be deserved by you, because nothing can be merited but by an act as excellent as the reward. No man can merit by any act a thing of a greater value than the act itself; but this grace is of another order, and far superior to any moral natural work. Indeed, upon covenant, if a man does such a thing, he shall have such a reward, the thing promised may be challenged upon the performing the condition, but cannot be said to be merited, because the act was inferior to the reward in the true value of it, but this grace could neither be merited nor challenged at God's hand upon a condition, since he had made

no promise in this kind to give you a right to such a demand. It is one thing to be capable of it, another thing to have a just right. A sinner in the state of sin is capable of being changed, but not capable of having a right to that change. Well, then, you could never deserve such a mercy; and will you prize it and bless God for it?

[4] Since you did not deserve it, no, nor the proposals of it, consider what a condition you had been in had God left you to yourselves, or put your wills only into an indifference. Had it been by a mere suasion, or a naked proposition of the truth, I suppose you are so sensible of the mutability of your wills, that you might well believe you should scarce have complied with God. Your security at best had been but as good as Adam's, who had his *posse* but not his *velle*. What furious passions and devils in your souls were set against him! and had you been left to your own choice, you would not have stirred one foot to follow his chariot. If you did 'purify your souls in obeying the truth,' it was 'through the Spirit,' [1 Peter i. 22](#); and all the faith you have was from the same fountain, [Acts xviii. 27](#), 'which believed through grace.' Put it to yourselves: Do you think your hearts were not so stout, that nothing but divine grace could mollify them? Do you think there would have been any heat or warmth in you unless God had kindled the flame? Can you imagine your frozen hearts would have melted but by a divine breath? It was happy for you that God would put your wills beyond an indifference, and deal with you by the same power as he dealt with Christ, not leaving him or you in a doubtful state between life and death. How happy was it for you that God would be conqueror, and surmount your resistance, tame your force, scatter your counsels, level your mountain, and bring your fierceness under the yoke; that he would not wait your choice and leisure, but make the event certain; that he had mercy on you, because he would have mercy; that he would turn the stream of your hearts by the overmastering tide of his grace, and overpower the flesh in the chief parts of your souls, and secure the rational powers of mind and will for himself! How glad may you be of the loss of that indifference that secures your happy estate for ever! Who that is in favour with a prince would not willingly have his will fixed to please him, and dread nothing more than such an indifference, whereby he might hate his prince and lose his favour?

[5.] Is there not reason you should bless God, when he has dealt thus graciously with you, and not with many others in the world, why any of you should be raised up to a spiritual life, when you see many others near you stretched out in a spiritual death; why one upon the same bench and not another; why one should be gathered with his arm, and another left to the jaws of the devouring lion, why you should have any choice fruit grow in any of your hearts, when thorns and briers grow in every hedge? That God should have afforded you means of regeneration, and not to most others in the world, is a ground of blessing and praise, much more that he should afford you the grace of regeneration, and not to many others under the same means. He has not dealt so with every nation in giving them the means, [Ps. cxlvii. 19](#); he has not dealt so with every person in giving them the grace.

That wind that blows where it lists has left other dry bones to remain dry still, passed by others more civil and of sweeter conversations; drawn his image in one, and left others to tumble down to hell in the likeness of Adam, wherein they were born, overlooked one that was not far from the kingdom of heaven, and laid hold on another that was many leagues further from Christ. The Spirit of God only makes this distinction: he will pour out his grace in Galatia and Macedonia, and not suffer it to be known in Bithynia: [Acts xvi. 6-8](#), 'And they essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not;' cause it to rain in one city, on one person, and not on another; call one out of the grave, and leave others under the bands of death and in the dregs of human nature. You see your calling, and you may see how distinguishing it is, 'not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty,' [1 Cor. i. 26](#). Can you see this and not bless the caller, the renewer? A less favour wrought so much upon David's heart that he would bless God in spite of mocks and scoffs, [2 Sam. vi. 21](#). Oh rich discriminating grace! Where any are peculiar monuments of grace, they should have peculiar notes of praise. What reason can others have to bless God, if such should have no hearts to bless him for so great a mercy? All are under God's will of precept, all are under his will of promise, if they perform that precept; but all are not under his will of purpose, to give them strength to perform that precept.

[6.] It is to be considered, too, with what pains and patience God wrought this work in your hearts. You may best know what ado God had with your hearts before they were thus formed according to his will. Were they not as clay to the potter, which needed much tempering before they were fit for use? Did God find that pliability in you that the devil found? Had he a cordial welcome at the first proffer? Do you not remember resistance enough to make you for ever ashamed that ever you should put the blessed God to that toil? And yet you know not the thousandth part of that resistance God knew was lodged in your nature. Do you not remember how he met you at every turn, hedged up your perverse way with thorns, before he could be admitted to speak a word to your heart, how he answered one objection after another, whereby you would have stifled his work? Can you remember this, and not admire the mercy that took such pains with so unprofitable a heart? It is called a resurrection, but it is more. Before the resurrection of the body, one part of man lives and waits for reunion though the body be crumbled into very dust; but there is no life in you naturally: so little in you to take part with God, that even that which is the glory of man, his mind, and reason, and wisdom, were in arms against this work, as well as the sensitive and brutish part, for 'the carnal mind was enmity against God,' [Rom. viii. 7](#). What was your language to God at first, but like that of the hellish spirit in the man in [Luke iv. 34](#): 'What have we to do with thee?' Yet he dealt with you as the sun with the earth, which scatters the mists it sends out to choke its light, and spreads its warm wings over the face of the world. So does God, though men offend him with the steams of their sins, and uncivilly command

him to depart from them, yet he leaves them not till he has made them willing that he should do them good.

[7.] The work itself requires admiration and blessing in regard of the excellency of it. It is more admirable than all the miracles of nature; the whole world can no more compare with it than a dunghill can equal the worth of a rock of diamonds; all blessings which make you happy spiritually and eternally are wrapped up in it. What can God give greater than his own nature? What are you capable of more than what he has done and will do upon that foundation? If God had only given thee knowledge, thou might have been a devil for all that; but the new nature makes you equal with angels. What man or angel could you be born of with so great advantage as to be born of God? There is no higher being to be born of. What can he do more than thus to beget you? You are new-born according to that image after which his only Son was eternally begotten; conceived by that Spirit whereby Christ was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin; raised by the same almighty hand whereby the great pattern of the new birth was raised from the dead. It is the highest elevation of human nature to be united to the Son of God, and to be made like to that glorious image. Greater gifts cannot be than these two, Christ to descend to partake of human nature, and the creature elevated to partake of the divine. If you will not loudly bless him for this, what can God do that shall deserve your praise, since a greater he cannot confer, more full of the spirits of his favour towards you?

[8.] May there not be some circumstances in your particular new birth that may raise your hearts to blessing and praise? Perhaps thou were 'born in a day,' as his promise is of a nation, [Isa. lxvi. 7, 8](#), and without those racking pains which attend the new birth of many. He did not take thee by the throat, nor arrest thee with legal terrors, but breathed upon thee with a gentle wind; conceived and formed thee in a little space of time, that thou were within the prospect of heaven before thou thought thyself out of the suburbs of hell, and brought thee forth a man-child before thou didn't imagine thyself to be delivered. Was it not mercy to renew thee without worrying thee; to melt thee by a gentle fire of love, not break thee piece-meal by the hammer of wrath, that thou should scarce discern the lance from the balsam, and the wound from the plaster? Perhaps he arrested thee in a full course of sin, in some desperate career, when some plot was laid for a high piece of wickedness. It had been an act of his power had thou been brought up in some religious family, tutored in the ways of religion by a choicer education; but perhaps God took thee from the very steams of hell, when thou had not one thought of him, and he might have let thee alone as well as he did others of thy companions. It had been admirable power to turn clear water into wine, but more to turn stinking and putrefied water into a generous wine. Do not the visible characters of mercy and power in such a case call for more praise at thy hands? Can any other cause have a pretence to put in for a share in thy acknowledgements?

[9.] You are not without many examples to move you to this acknowledgement. Our Saviour himself could not regard the centurion's faith without astonishment. He wondered at that in his humanity which he wrought himself by his divinity, [Mat. viii. 10](#). And when Peter professes his faith in him by acknowledging him to be the Son of God, Christ presently owns his Father as the author of it: [Mat. xvi. 17](#), 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Angels sang both at the first and second creation, and shouted for joy when the corner-stone thereof was laid, [Job xxxviii. 6, 7](#). When they saw its beautiful order, they then showed themselves to be the sons of God indeed, in glorifying their Father for his incomparable works. The second creation being more glorious than the first, is not celebrated by them with fainter shootings; if God has then hallelujahs for you, it is fit he should have hallelujahs from you. If angels speak loud, it is not fit you should speak low; it is their concern, as they are God's friends and servants; your concern, as you are his workmanship, of his own carving. The saints in all ages of the church have led the way in this acknowledgement. The elders, made kings and priests on earth, in a conquest of Satan and their own hearts, crowned with a blessed grace, cast down their crowns at the feet of God [Rev. ix. 11](#), 'For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created,' both the present new creation and the old. 'Thou hast loosed my bonds,' [Ps. cxvi. 16](#). What follows? 'I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.' And God's renewing David's youth like the eagle's, his changing him into a new man, says Jerome, is one argument of David's praise, [Ps. ciii. 6](#). Add to this, heathens have acknowledged it to be the work of God, one examining the reason why Homer calls virtuous men "dious", answers. Because goodness was not a work of art, but "ergon Dios". If divining and mystical knowledge be "theiai tini epipnoiai", by divine inspiration, shall we say of virtue it is "ergon technes thentes", the work of man's art? Where do you find any like Nebuchadnezzar, gazing upon the divine formation in his own heart, and proudly crying out, 'Is not this great Babylon which I have built?' Does such language drop from a David's mouth? No; but 'thou hast quickened me.' Or from Paul? No, 'by grace I am what I am.' Every inch, every spark, every joint of the new man is from grace.

[10.] If you do not acknowledge it to God, and bless him for it, you may justly suspect you are not born of him. It is the nature of true grace to reflect back upon God, as it is of a sunbeam shining upon a wall to reflect back upon the sun. Blessing God for it, is a character of a renewed man. It is an evidence of the ruin of the contradiction of nature against God, when man can strip himself of all, and own God the prime fountain of what he is and has. If a man boast of his being the cause of a new birth in himself by any work of his own, it is a shrewd sign he is not renewed, because by such boasting he crosses the main end of the gospel, which is to stain the pride of man, and debase him to the dust from all grounds of glorying in himself. How jealous was the apostle in this case, and therefore backs his assertion again and again, that he might beat man's hands off from fingering anything of God's glory:

[Eph. ii. 5](#), 'By grace you are saved;' again, verse 8, 9, 'and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' Once again, 'Not of works.' And the reason why he is thus earnest, was perpetually to discountenance self-confidence, 'lest any man should boast.' The design of God in all gospel dispensations, is to pull away the stool whereon the flesh sits to glory: [1 Cor i. 29-31](#), 'That no flesh should glory in his presence.' It would seem strange that the new birth, a main gospel work, should be wrought without promoting a gospel end. To have a new birth, and such a flourishing pride, opposite to the end of it, is a contradiction. If the doctrine of faith does exclude boasting, as [Rom. iii. 27](#), boasting is 'excluded by the law of faith,' the grace of faith also will exclude it; where the new birth is wrought, pride, the great enemy to it, will surely be captivated. We are then something in and by God, when we are most nothing in ourselves.

Well, then, be much in the work of praising God, who shined into thy heart when it was dark, and sealed instruction to thee; who took away the stony heart, and introduced one of flesh in the room; who manifested a day of power in the night of your weakness. Can you, dare you, to ascribe it to yourselves? Let God then have the praise. It is our fault we are more in complaints of what we want, than acknowledgements of what we have. Oh, rob not God of his deity, pretend not yourselves partners with him in the least of the stock. The more you return the glory of his grace, the more will he return the comfort of it to you; the more you give him that glory he is so jealous of, the more he will give you that grace he is so liberal of.

(3.) A third duty for those that are renewed. Acknowledge God in all the changes you see in others. Miracles must be regarded. It is greater for the apostles to act with new hearts than to speak with new tongues; greater than to stop the sun in its course, which would set all the world upon an astonished gaze. Shall any such miraculous work be done in our view, and we stand only as stupid spectators, and not render to God that glory which is due to him for his choicest work? As the sight and consideration of the material creation kept up the notion of the being of God as creator, so the consideration of his works upon the souls of men will quicken thy sentiments of God as a new creator. One is an argument to prove the power of his essence, the other an argument of the power of his grace. Noah does not bless them first for that act of filial duty showed to his father, but blesses God as the author of that modesty Shem had shown in covering his father's nakedness: [Gen. ix. 26](#), 'Blessed be the God of Shem.' When a great number were turned to Christ, Barnabas presently cast up his eye to the grace of God, 'he saw the grace of God,' [Acts xi. 21-23](#). Let every Lazarus you see raised from the grave raise up your faith to a higher elevation, and dress it in a jubilee attire. When you see a new temple reared to God, own it as the Lord's doing, and let it be marvellous in your eyes.

(4.) Be content with every condition your new creator shall cast you into. Discontent at any of God's dispensations does ill become one whom God has new begotten to a glorious

inheritance. What can he do more than he has done, and what he will do upon that foundation? All that he acts is to further that which he has so powerfully and mercifully begun. What son would repine at the losing a rattle, as long as he is born to a never-fading inheritance? If grace has put forth a power to new create you, it will not use that power otherwise than for your good. It may contradict your carnal desires, not your spiritual interest. Well may any man be content with the jewel that is left, though the casket be lost. All things are too light if put into the balance with the new birth: the dearest husband or wife, the sweetest children or friends, the most flourishing inheritance; study, therefore, contentment in the worst condition upon this ground; you know not how soon you may be put to practise all your skill. Do you not see the heavens gathering blackness over your heads? A new birth, that allies us to God as his children, will be of more force to settle us, than calamities can be to discompose us; for never was child so dear to an earthly, as a new created soul is to its heavenly Father.

(5.) Walk worthy of the author of it. A verbal acknowledgement will signify little without a real imitation of the virtues of him 'that has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' [1 Peter ii. 9](#). A holiness is to be expressed by you, like the holiness of that God who has renewed you. Let no devilish or brutish carriage be yoked with a divine birth, indeed it cannot; the bespotting corruption of the world will not agree with the regeneration of the soul; the stains of the flesh are inconsistent with the purity of the new nature. Belial and Christ, God and Satan, are not joint begetters; Satan's impure breathings upon you should not be admitted to mix with the breath of God. A new nature by grace must not imitate a brutish nature by sin; a soul born of God must not be fashioned according to the world. If you differ from the world in your nature by grace, differ from the world also in your carriage by holiness. It is uncomely for one born of God to be taken with the foolish, flaunting pride of the world, more than the pattern God has set him; that is, to imitate beasts, not a heavenly Father. The world is little, nothing, vanity in the eye of God; so should it be in the eye of a divinely begotten soul. Use the world as travellers an inn, to lodge, not to dwell in, to accommodate you in your journey to that Father of whom you were born. Let a heaven-born nature be attended with heavenly flights, longing for that happy state wherein nothing but the divine nature shall be seen in union, as nothing but fire is seen in melted gold.

(6.) Mourn for your imperfections. Give God his due, and grieve for your defect in paving him his own. The soul in creation comes pure out of God's hand, but it is poisoned by the flesh, and the impurity in the sensitive part of man. Though your grace be from God, yet your imperfections are from yourselves. The waters that run through sulphur and alum mines flow from the sea, but the ill taste and scent are communicated by the matter it mixes with in its passage. God is the author of your faith, but not of the weakness of your faith; the author of your love, but not of the coldness of your love; the author of your zeal, but not of the faintness of your zeal. Chide your hearts, therefore for your weakness, as Christ did

his disciples for their slowness in faith. 'Rejoice with trembling,' [Ps. ii. 11](#), rejoice in what you have, and mourn for what you want and come short in. Reason you have, since there is too much of the power of nature remaining with our best grace, so that it may be said of it, as Lot of Zoar, What grace has enclosed is but a little one.

Exhort. 2. To those that are not born of God. You see at whose hands you are to seek it. God was the first contriver of the gospel, the first preacher of the gospel, the sole artist in any gospel operation. No man can come except the Father draw him; not some men, but no man; every man must therefore seek to this great attracter. It is a vanity of human nature, that every man loves to be "autodidaktos", his own teacher; and no less a vanity it is, that every man loves to be "autogennetos", his own begetter. Men glory in the knowledge they get without a teacher, and no less glory in any change they can hammer out without a spiritual Father. As he that scorns to be taught by another shall surely have a fool to his tutor, so he that thinks to gain spiritual life by himself, shall be sure to have death for his quickener. No man would seek life from death, or light from darkness, and the best natural man is no better. The glory of the Lord must rise upon us, before we can rise out of our death in sin: 'Arise, and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,' [Isa. lx. 1](#).

(1.) Seek it only at the hands of God. It is not to be had by outward rules, but divine influence; the streams of life must come from him, since with him only is the fountain of life: [Ps. xxxvi. 9](#), 'I will give a heart of flesh;' I alone, without any other co-ordinate cause, either man or angel. He only has the key of the heart, as well as that of the womb; confide not in yourselves. Adam was a root to convey sin and death, but no root to convey spiritual life. Corruption comes by propagation from him, grace only by spiritual regeneration from God. Would any wise man seek for water in a desert, or for grace from himself, who is naturally a dry wilderness? What toad, naturally full of poison, ever made himself sweet and wholesome? As Christ was by the grace of God made partaker of our nature in his incarnation, so by the same grace only can we be made partakers of his nature by regeneration. We are naturally weeds; if ever we be flowers in God's garden, the transformation must be God's act alone.

Seek it of God. But,

[1.] In the use of means, not abating anything of thine own industry. Seek, while God offers it; hold your mouth under the fountain while it runs. Moses hewed the tables, but God wrote the law. God promised David and Gideon victory, but not with their hands in their pockets, but their arms and armies about them. Moses must fight with the arms of Israel, but pray to the God of battles and victory. We must with one hand use the directions God has given, and lift up the other in spiritual supplication for success upon them. Therefore let not the doctrine of God's being the cause of the new birth encourage your laziness and sloth. This sloth among men Chemnitius thought to be the occasion of Pelagius his error,

who, seeing the laziness of Christians, thought to correct it by making them think highly of their own strength; but that was a dangerous extreme.

[2.] Yet let your eye be solely upon God in the use of them, since all the means in the world cannot do it without him. Unless God pull up the floodgates, no water of life can stream into the soul; means can no more of themselves cast out death than the disciples could cast out some devils; but Christ was able to do what they could not. All the angels in heaven and men upon earth have not been able, these almost six thousand years, to make one fly; yet all the angels and the whole frame of the world were made by God in six days. Men speak to the sense, God to the heart; they to the understanding, and God into it; men argue with the will, and God persuades it. All the clamours of the whole nation of the Jews, yea, of all the men in the world, would not have made Lazarus stir out of the grave, had not our Saviour spoken the word, 'Lazarus, come forth.' How often do the clouds of heaven drop upon men, yet they still remain as a dry chip, their stony hearts perhaps moistened with some transient flashy affections, but not mollified into flesh. Pray therefore to God, before the use of any means, Lord, breathe life so powerfully upon me, that I may walk before thee, and never find myself again in a natural winding-sheet. Let thy voice, Lord, be heard and felt by me as the voice of thy Son was by Lazarus. To use means without a seeking to God for his blessing, is to be exercised in divine institutions with an atheistic spirit. He is an atheist that expects nourishment from his meat without God's benediction, and he no less that runs to means without lifting up his heart to God, thinking to get grace conveyed by the means without God's operation.

(2.) Direction. Plead much with God from the glorious attributes he honours in this work. Lord, here is a subject for thy power to work upon. God made the heavens when there was nothing but a rude mass; he brought forth the sun, moon, and stars, with all their glory, out of the barren womb of nothing. Is thy heart worse than nothing, more contradictory to God than nothing? It is so. Assume an argument from hence: Lord, here is a subject for thy power above what was manifested in creation; there is not a more tough heart in the world than mine; lose not the opportunity of displaying the greatness of thy power, since there is scarce a heart more stout and unwieldy than mine is. Lord, bestow a vital principle upon me; thou did it to the lifeless body of Adam; thy power will be more magnified in the breathing upon a lifeless soul of a son and daughter of Adam. In the same manner plead his wisdom and holiness. Plead also the enmity thy sin has against him, the wrong it has done him, in spoiling the creation, changing the end of it, hindering thee from thy natural duty, and that it is not for the interest of his glory to let sin bear such a sway and dominion, and usurp his room in one who would fain be another man.

(3.) Be deeply sensible of the corruption of thy nature; the want of this is the cause there is so little sense in men and women of the absolute necessity of the grace of regeneration, and a change of nature. Therefore labour to see yourselves in a forlorn condition by spiritual

death. Look upon your great fall as a son of Adam, a slave of Satan, and possessor of a hellish nature, and at a vast distance from God and happiness.

(4.) Grieve not the Spirit in any of his operations. Quench not the sparks of the Spirit in any previous preparations and dispositions to this new birth. Be pliable to his breathings, hoist up your sails to receive his gales; when he knocks, open thy heart as wide as may be, push it to the furthest point, that there may be no *remora*; let all the house be free for his triumphant entrance. Since thy strength is too weak for it, beg of him at such a season to break it open; set upon prayer at such a season, and leave not till you have prayed your spirits up and your resistance out. How ungrateful and foolish is it to grieve that Spirit, who offers to form you into a new birth, and bring the life and joy of heaven into your heart! This is the only means to recover the loss you had by the fall of Adam, and surmount all the misery of it. Seek to him; he that can gather the dust of your bodies, if blown to the further part of the world, and knit it together, can overcome the filthy and deadly noisomeness of your souls; he can make a barren wilderness to become pools of water, a lump of vanity a garden of pleasure, a heap of rubbish to sprout up a new-born sun. If you would therefore be animated with a spirit of life, you must approach the beams of the sun, and lie under the rich and enlivening influences of it.

End of part 2 of *A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration*.