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The works of the late Rev.
Stephen Charnock







THE
WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

IN

NINE VOLUMES.

WITH A

PREFATORY DEDICATION AND MEMOIR,

BY

EDWARD PARSONS.

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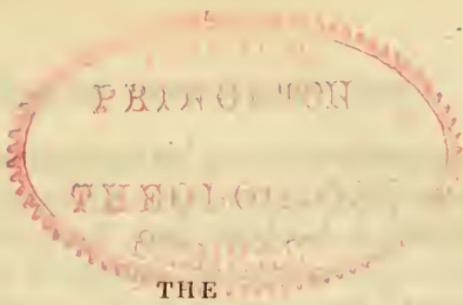
THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

1877

LEEDS

CONTENTS.

	Page.
I. The Providence of God, <i>concluded</i> , - - - - -	1
II. The Necessity of Regeneration, - - - - -	119
III. The Nature of Regeneration, - - - - -	267
IV. The Efficient of Regeneration, - - - - -	439



PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

PART VII.

ALL THINGS IN THE WORLD FOR THE GOOD OF
THE CHURCH.

God's end in all his actions—All good things are for the prosperity of the church—The world—The gifts and common graces of men—The angels ministering spirits to the church—The highest orders of them—Armies of them employed—Governed by the Head of the church for this purpose—The great things they have accomplished under his government—They engage in the interests of the church with delight.

THE *second* doctrine to be discussed is, that all the motions of providence in the world are *ultimately for the good of the church*; of those whose heart is perfect towards him. Providence follows the rule of scripture. Whatsoever was written, was written for the church's comfort, *Rom. 15. 4.* Whatsoever is acted in order to any thing written, is acted for the church's good. All the providences of God in the

world are conformable to his declarations in his word. All former providences were ultimately in order to the bringing a Mediator into the world, and for the promotion of his glory; then surely all the providences of God shall be in order to the perfecting the glory of Christ in that mystical body, whereof Christ is head, and wherein his affection and his glory are so much concerned. See the proof of this by a scripture or two: *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies, Psal. 25. 10.* Not one path, but *all* the works and motions; not one particular act or passage of providence, but the whole tract of his proceedings; not only those which are more smooth and pleasant, but those which are more rugged and bitter. All *mercy and truth*, suitable to that affection he bears in his heart to them, and suitable to the declaration of that affection he hath made in his promise. There is a contexture and a friendly connection of kindness and faithfulness in every one of them. They both embrace each other in every motion of God towards them.

As mercy made the covenant, so truth shall perform it. And there shall be as much mercy as truth in all God's actings towards those that keep it. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, Rom. 8. 28:* we know; we do not conjecture or guess so, but we have an infallible assurance of it. *All things*, even the most frightful, and so those that have, in respect of sense, nothing but gall and wormwood in them; *work together*; they all conspire with an admirable harmony and unanimous consent for a christian's good. One particular act may seem to work the harm of the church, as one particular act may work to the good of wicked men: but the whole series and frame of things combine together for the good of those that are affectionate to him. Both the lance that makes us bleed, and the healing remedy.

Both the applications that occasion the greatest pain, and the pleasant and animating cordials combine together for the patient's cure; *who are the called according to his purpose.* Here the apostle renders a reason of this position; because they are called not only in the general amongst the rest of the world, to whom the gospel comes; but they are such that were in God's purpose and counsel from eternity to save, and therefore resolved to incline their will to faith in Christ. Therefore all his other counsels about the affairs of the world shall be for their good.

. Another reason of this, the apostle intimates, ver. 27, *The Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* The intercessions of the Spirit, which are also according to God's will and purpose, will not be fruitless in the main end, which both the intercessions of the Spirit and purpose of God, and the will and desire of the saints aim at, which is their *good.* Indeed where any one is the object of this grand purpose of God, he is the object of God's infinite and innumerable thoughts. *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered, Psal. 40. 5.* The psalmist seems to intimate, that in all the wonderful works which God hath done, his thoughts are towards his people. He thinks of them in all his actions; and those thoughts are infinite, and cannot be numbered and reckoned up by any creature. He seems to restrain the thoughts of God towards his people in all those works of wonder which he does in the world, and which others are the subjects of: but his thoughts, or purposes, and intentions in all (for the word signifies *purposes* too) are chiefly, next to his own glory, directed toward his people, those that trust in him, which he had pronounced *blessed*, ver. 4. They run in his mind as if his heart was set upon them, and none but them.

Here I shall premise two things as the ground-work of what follows.—1. God certainly in all his actions *has some end*, that is without question, because he is a wise agent; to act vainly and lightly, is an evidence of imperfection, which cannot be ascribed to the only wise God. The wheels of providence are *full of eyes*, *Ezek. 1. 18.* There is motion, and a knowledge of the end of that motion. And Jesus Christ, who is God's deputy in the providential government, hath *seven eyes*, as well as *seven horns*, *Rev. 5. 6.* A perfect strength, and a perfect knowledge how to use that strength, and to what end to use it. *Seven* being the number of perfection in scripture.

2. That certainly is God's end which *his heart is most set upon, and that which is last in execution.* What will God do at the folding up of the world, but perfect his people, and welcome them into glory? Therefore God principally, next to himself, loves his church. The whole earth is his, but the church is his treasure; *If you will keep my covenant, then shall you be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine, Exod. 19. 5; Segullah*, such a treasure, that a man, a king will intrust in no hands but his own; *all the earth is mine*, is not a reason why the church was his treasure, but an incentive to thankfulness, that when the whole earth was his, and lay before him, and there were many people that he might have chosen and loved before them, yet he selected them to make them his choicest treasure. And when he hath thus made them his treasure, what he does for them is with his whole heart, and with his whole soul. Speaking of making an everlasting covenant, he adds, *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, &c. assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul, Jer. 32. 41, 42.* As though God minded nothing else but those people he had made an everlasting covenant with; which is the highest security, and most pregnant expression of his affection that can be given to any; not to give them a moiety

All good Things for the Prosperity of the Church. 5

of his heart, but the whole infinite entire piece, and to engage it all with the greatest delight in doing good to them. That infinite heart of God, and all the contrivances and workings of it, centre in the church's welfare. The world is a wilderness, but the church is a garden. If he water the wilderness, will he not much more dress his garden? If the flights of birds be observed by him, shall not also the particular concernments of the church? He hath a repository for them, and all that belong to them; he hath a book of life for their names, *Luke* 10. 20, a book of record for their members. *Psa.* 139. 16, a book of remembrance for their speeches, *Mal.* 3. 16, and a book of providence for their preservation, *Exod.* 32. 32.

In the prosecution of this, I shall shew,

FIRST. That it is so *de facto*, and hath been so.

SECONDLY. That according to the state of things, and God's economy, it must be so.

THIRDLY. The improvement of it, by way of use.

FIRST. That all providence is, for the good of the church *de facto*, and has been so: this will appear,

First. By an *enumeration* of things.

I. All good things are for the good of the church.

1. The *world*. The whole world was made and ordained for the good of the church, next to the glory of God. This will appear in three things.

The continuance of the world is *for their sakes*. God would have destroyed the world because of the ignorance and wickedness of it, before this time, but he overlooked it all, and had respect to the times of Christ, and the publishing of faith in him, and repentance; *And the times of this ignorance God winked at, Acts* 17. 30; God overlooked,* he looked not so upon them, as to be provoked to destroy the world; but his eyes were fixed on the times of Christianity; therefore would not take notice in the extremity of

* ἡ περιεδῶν.

his justice of the wickedness of those foregoing ages. Believers are *the salt of the earth*, *Matt. 5. 13*, which makes the world savoury to God, and keeps it from corrupting. It is meant not only of the apostles, but of Christ's disciples, of all christians, for to them was that sermon made. *If the salt have lost his savour*, ver. 1, if the salt be corrupted, and christianity overthrown in the world, wherewith shall the world be salted? How can it be kept from corruption? If they that persecuted the prophets before you in Judea, (which is sometimes called the earth in scripture) cannot relish you, and find nothing grateful to their palates in your doctrine and conversation, wherewith shall they be salted? How shall they be preserved from corruption? The land will be good for nothing but to be given as a prey to the Romans to be trod under their feet, as being cast out of God's protection. They are the foundation of the world; *The righteous are an everlasting foundation*, *Prov. 10. 25*. Maimonides understands it thus, that the world stands for the sakes of the righteous.

When God had Noah and his family lodged in the ark, he cares not what deluge and destruction he brings upon the rest of the world. When he had conducted Lot out of Sodom, he brings down that dreadful storm of fire.* He cares for no place, no, nor for the whole world, any longer than whilst his people are there, or he hath some to bring in, in time. For the meanest believer is of more worth than a world; therefore when God has gathered all together, he will set fire to this frame of the creation; for what was the end of Christ's coming and dying, but to gather all things together in one? *That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ*, *Eph. 1. 10*. When Christ hath summed up all together, he hath attained his end. And to what purpose then can we imagine God should

* Grotius on the place.

continue in the world any longer? For his delight is not simply in the world, but in the saints there; *But to the saints that are in the earth, in whom is all my delight, Psa. 16. 3*; they are the only excellent things in the earth, which Christ speaks, who knew well what was the object of his father's pleasure. The sweet savour God smelled in Noah's sacrifice, was the occasion of God's declaration for the world's standing; *And the Lord said in his heart, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake, Gen. 8. 21.* That he would no more smite it with a totally destroying judgment. It was his respect to Christ represented in that sacrifice, and to the faith and grace of Noah the sacrificer. What savour could an infinitely pure spirit smell in the blood and flames of beasts?

The *course of natural things is for the good of the church, or particular members of it.* God makes articles of agreement with the beasts and fowls, whose nature is raging and ravenous, and binds them in sure bonds for the performance of those articles; *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground, and will make them to lie down safely, Hosea 2. 18.* As upon our sin God can arm them against us; so upon our obedience he can make them serviceable even against their natures; as if he had made a covenant with them, and they had both the reason and virtue to observe it. I do not remember any instance in scripture, that God went out of the usual track of his providence, and acted in an extraordinary manner, but where his people were one way or other concerned.

It was for Joshua's and the Israelites' sake that the sun was arrested to stand still in the valley of Ajalon, that they might have light enough to defeat their enemies, and pursue their victory, *Josh. 10. 12, 13.* The sea shall, against its natural course, stand in heaps like walls of brass to assist the Israelites' escape. *Exod. 14. 22.* The fire is restrained

in the operation of its nature, even whilst it retains its burning quality, when the lives of the three valiant believing children are in danger. The mouths of lions are muzzled, when the safety of his beloved Daniel is concerned, *Dan.* 6. 22. And the shadow goes back upon the dial for Hezekiah's sake, *2 Kings* 20. 11. When God would at any time deliver his people, he can muster up lightnings and thunders for their assistance. *1 Sam.* 7. 10. He can draw all the regiments of heaven into battle-array, and arm the stars to fight against Sisera, when Israel's condition needs it; and make even the lowest creatures to list themselves as auxiliaries in the service. God hath not a displeasure with senseless creatures, neither is transported with strains of fury against such objects, when he alters their natural course; *Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thy horses and chariots of salvation? Hab.* 3. 8. No, but he made those creatures the horses and chariots to speed assistance and salvation to his people, which the psalmist elegantly describes, *Psa.* 114. All creatures are his host; and that God that created them, hath still the sovereign command over them, and can embody them in an army to serve his purpose for the deliverance of his people, as he did against Pharaoh.

The interest of nations is ordered as is most for the church's good. He orders both the course of natural things, and of civil affairs, for their interest. He alters the state of things, and changeth governors and governments for the sake of his people. For these causes God sent Elisha to crown Jehu king, *I have anointed thee king over the people, the Lord, &c. that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel,* *2 Kings* 9. 6, 7. For the sake of the godly in that nation, and the revenging the blood of the prophets which had been shed, was he raised up by the Lord. He sent such judgments upon Egypt,

that it was as much the interest of that nation to let Israel go, as it was before to keep them their vassals. God orders the interest and affairs of nations for those ends; and according to this disposition of affairs, Christ times his intercessions for his church. The angels had been sent out to view the state of the world, and found it in peace; *Behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest, Zach. 1. 11.* There had been wars in Artaxerxes and Xerxes' time, but in the time of Darius, that part of the world had an universal peace, which was the fittest time for the restoration of the Jews, and building the temple, because it could not be built but by the king's cost, whose treasure in the time of war was expended another way; nor would it consist with their policy to restore the Jews to their government at such a time when they had wars with the neighbour parts of Egypt.

See how God orders the state of the world in subserviency to his gracious intentions towards his church. The time of the Jewish captivity was now out, according to the promise of God, and God gives that part of the world a general peace, that the restoration of the Jews, and the rebuilding of the temple might be facilitated, and the truth of his promise in their deliverance accomplished. Upon the news of this general peace in that part of the world, Christ expostulates with God for the restoration of Jerusalem, *How long, O Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?* ver. 12. The time of the captivity determined by God, was now expired. The first reformation in Germany was backed by reasons of state, as it was then altered; it being the interest of many princes of that country to countenance Luther's doctrine, for the putting a stop to the growing greatness of Charles the Fifth, who had evident designs to enslave them. I might mention many more, only by the way let me advise those that have an inclination to read histories of former

transactions, to which men naturally are addicted, to make this your end, to observe the strange providences of God in the world, and how admirably he hath made them subservient to the interest of the church; which will be the most profitable way of reading them, whereby they will not only satisfy your curiosity, but establish your christianity.

Calvin understands that place, *He sets the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel, Deut. 32. 8*, that in the whole ordering of the state of the world, God proposes this as his end, to consult for the good of his people, and his care extends to the rest only in order to them; and though they are but a small number, yet he orders his whole government of the world's affairs as may best tend to their salvation. Therefore God sets the people bounds, or enlarges them according as they may be serviceable one way or other to this end. And the reason is rendered, *For the Lord's portion is his people, and Jacob is the lot of his inheritance, ver. 9*. Therefore God orders all the rest of the world in subserviency to the maintaining and improving his portion and inheritance.

2. As the world, so the *gifts* and *common graces of men in the world*, are for the good of the church, which is a great argument for providence in general; since there is nothing so considerable in government as the disposing of places to men according to their particular endowments and abilities for them. And the bestowing such gifts upon men, is none of the meanest arguments for God's providential government of the world. As, 1. The *gifts* of good men. The gifts conferred upon Paul were deposited in him, not only to be possessed by him, but used and laid out for the good of the church; *Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, Col. 1. 25*. The manifestation of the Spirit to any man is given to profit withal, *1 Cor. 12. 7*. And this is the great end for which men

should seek to excel, viz. for the edifying of the church; *Forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church, 1 Cor. 14. 12.*

The gifts and common graces of *bad men* are for the good of the church. There is something that is amiable in men, though they have not grace. As in stones, plants, and flowers, though they have not sense, there is something grateful in them, as colour, and smell, &c. And all those things that are lovely in men, are for the church's good, the best life, and the worst death, things present, let who will be the possessor, all things between life and death are for the good of believers, because they are Christ's; *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, 1 Cor. 3. 22.* i. e. whether the gifts of the prime lights in the church, or the common gifts of the world, *all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* God is the dispenser of them, Christ is the governor of them, and all for your sakes. As the medicinal qualities of waters are not for the good of themselves, but the accommodation of the indigencies of men. By the common works of the Spirit, God keeps men from the evil of the world. For it cannot be supposed, that the Spirit, whose mission is principally for the church, should give such gifts out of love to men which hate him, and are not the objects of his eternal purpose; but he hath some other ends in doing it, which is the advantage of his church and people.

And this God causes by the preaching of the gospel, which when it works gracious works in some, produceth common works in others for the good of those gracious ones. As a seed of corn hath straw, husks, and chaff comes up with it, which are shelters to that little seed which lies in the midst; so in the preaching of the gospel, there are some husks come up among natural men, which God makes to be shelters to the church, as those common works, and

restraining men through the knowledge of Christ. God gives gifts to them, not out of love to them, but love to his church; as nurses of great men's children are fed with better meat than the other servants, not out of any particular personal respect to them, but to their office, that the milk whereby the child is nourished may be the sweeter and wholesomer; were it not for that relation, she must be content with the diet allowed to the rest of the servants.

Some noisome plants may have medicinal virtues, which the physician extracts for the cure of a disease, and flings the rest upon a dunghill. God bestows such qualities upon men, otherwise unsavoury to him, which he draws forth upon several occasions for the good of those that are more peculiarly under his care, and then casts them away. These gifts are indeed the ruin of bad men, because of their pride; but the church's advantage in regard of their excellency, and are often as profitable to others, as dangerous to themselves. As all that good which is in plants and animals is for the good of man, so all the gifts of natural men are for the church's good, for they are for that end as the principal, next the glory of God; because every inferior thing is ordained to something superior as its end. Plants are ordained for the nourishment of beasts, and both plants and beasts for men. The inferior men for the service of higher, and all for the good of the community; yet still there is a higher end beyond these, viz. the glory of God, to which they are ultimately ordained, which is so connected with the church's good, that what serves one serves the other.

3. *Angels*, the highest creatures in the creation, are ordered for the good of the church. If the stars are not cyphers in the world only to be gazed upon, but have their influences both upon plants and animals; as the sun in impregnating the earth, and enlivening the plants, and assisting the growth of fruits for the good of mankind. If the stars have those natural

influences upon the sensible world, the angels, which are the morning stars, have no less interest, as instruments, in the government of it. The heathens had such a notion of demons working those things which were done in the world, but according to the will and order of the supreme God. The angels are called watchers; *A watcher, and an holy one, Dan. 4. 13. This is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, ver. 17*; they watch for God's orders, and watch for God's honour, and the church's good. There are orders of state among them, for we read of their decree; it is called their decree ministerially, as they execute it; *approbative*, by way of approbation, as they subscribe to the equity and goodness of it.

As the saints are said to judge the world, not *authoritative*, by way of authority, as in commission with Christ, but as they approve of Christ's sentence. They seem to request those things of God which may make for his glory; and they decree among themselves what is fit to be presented to God in order to his glory. They cannot endure that men should trample upon God's authority, despoil him of his right, and tread down his inheritance; and therefore they send such requests to God to act so as men may acknowledge him and his government; *To the intent that the living may know that that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men.* Their care therefore must be for the church, since God rules all things in order to that, and since that is God's portion and inheritance; so that as they have a care of God's glory, they must also have a care of God's portion, and his peculiar treasure. The inward part of the temple was to be adorned with cherubims, to note the special attendance of the holy angels in the assemblies of the saints. As evil angels plot against the church, so good angels project for it.*

*. Trap. on Numb. p. 58.

Though in the scripture we find angels sometimes employed in affairs of common providence, and doing good to them that are not of the church; as one is sent to comfort Hagar, and relieve Ishmael upon his cry, though he had scoffed at Isaac, the heir of the covenant, when he was in Abraham's family, *Gen.* 21. 17; yet for the most part they were employed in the concerns of some of his special servants. Angels thrust Lot out of Sodom, *Gen.* 19. 25, 26. An angel stopped the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the den; *My God hath sent his angels, and hath shut the lions' mouths,* *Dan.* 6. 18. God employs angels in the preserving and ruining of empires, which is clear in the prophecy of Daniel; and some understand, *And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one,* *Isa.* 10. 34, by an angel. As the soul sends forth a multitude of spirits swiftly into the nerves for the supply of the lowest member, which runs thither upon the least motion; so the angels, which are God's ministers, run at the appointment of God, and are employed in all the wheels of providence; *The spirit of the living creatures* was in the wheels of providence, *Ezek.* 1. 20.

The *highest orders* of angels are not exempted from being officers for the church. Though they are called God's angels in respect of their immediate attendance on God; yet they are called man's angels in respect of the service they do for them; *Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,* *Matt.* 18. 10. They are not the ordinary sort of angels only which attend upon those little ones, upon young converts, humble souls, those little ones in the kingdom of heaven; but they are the highest courtiers there, such as see the face of God, and stand before him. A king hath many servants, but not every servant, only the chief of the nobility, stand before him; so they are not angels of the meanest order and rank in heaven that are ordered to attend the lowest Christian. The apostle makes no doubt of this; *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent*

forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Heb. 1. 14.

He asserts confidently that not *one* of them is blotted out of the list for this employment. *Are they not all?* None are exempted from the service of God, so none are exempted from the end of that service, which is the good of believers. They are God's servants, but for the church's good, for them which shall be heirs; *Are they not all?* It is irrational to deny it. And they are sent forth, every one of them hath his commission signed by God for this purpose, and not only for the church in general, but for every member in particular; *for the heirs of salvation.* And not only for them which are already called and enrolled, but for them which shall be called, whose names are written in the book of God's election, *who shall be heirs.* And they are not only faintly sent, as if they might go if they will, but they have a strict charge to look after them well, not in one or two of their works, or ways, but in all; *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, to bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone, Psal. 91. 11;* they are to use all their strength to this purpose, *to bear them up in their hands.* As the elder children are appointed by parents to the care of the younger in their works and motions, and to use both their wisdom and strength for them. The angels are a guard to secure them here, and at last to convey them to their Father's house, *Luke 16. 22;* when a man is in favour with a prince, all the courtiers will be observant of him.

Armies of angels are employed for the service of the church. There are great multitudes of them, as Bildad speaks; *Is there any number of his armies? Job 25. 3,* that is, of his angels. When Joel speaks of the heathens gathering together, *Thither,* saith he, *Lord, cause thy mighty ones to come down, Joel 3. 11.* A whole squadron of them shall attend upon a gracious man according to the circumstances he is in-

volved in; *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him; and when Jacob saw them, he said, this is God's host, Gen. 32. 1, 2.* Regiments of angels, enough to make up an army, for so Jacob terms them, met him upon the way to secure his brother Esau, and to encourage him in his journey. So some interpret *The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, 2 Sam. 5. 24.* The sign of the marching of a brigade of angels, with the Lord at the head of them, for the discomfiture of David's enemies; *Then shall the Lord go out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines;* and this they do not of their own heads, but by the pleasure of God, not only by a bare will, but a delight; *Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure, Psal. 103. 21:* רִצְוֵי his choicest pleasure, he delights to see this his militia upon action.

3. Christ hath *the government of them* to this end for his church. Angels are all put in subjection to him; *In that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him, Heb. 2. 7, 8.* He is *exalted above all principality and power: God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Eph. 1. 21, 22.* All things, even principalities and powers are put under his feet, to be commissioned and influenced by him for the good of his church; they are ordered by the Spirit of Christ to this purpose; *Those are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth, Zach. 1. 10.* They are his faithful messengers dispatched into the world by him, as scouts and spies to take notice of the state of the world, and to give him intelligence, and an exact account of affairs, and, ver. 11, they give an account to Christ. Christ is the head and general of them, *Col. 2. 10.* They are his host, always in a warlike posture, with Christ at the head of them, *Zach. 1. 8,* upon their horses, which notes readiness to move, and speed in motion. And as an host, they are said to pitch their tents round

about them that fear him, and are in a continual conflict with the evil angels to prevent their designs in the behalf of Christ, whom they acknowledge as their head by their worship of him, *Heb.* 1. 6. Christ orders them to take care to seal his servants in the foreheads that they may be preserved in the storms which shall happen in the world at the time of the ruin of the Romish papacy; an angel comes that had the seal of the living God, commissioned of God, saying, *Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in the foreheads,* *Rev.* 7. 2, 3.

4. The *great actions* which have been done in the world, or shall be done for the church, *are performed by them.* Angels were sent as expresses by God with his great decrees concerning the revolutions of times; *And I heard a man's voice which called and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision,* *Dan.* 7. 16; & 8. 16. An angel was sent to Daniel with the message of a Redeemer, and the clearest prophecy of Christ, which the Jews are not able to answer to this day, which they most startle at; part of the discovery of the Revelation to St. John, which is as a standing almanack to the church, was made us by an angel, *Dan.* 9. 21; *Rev.* 10. 8, 9; & 22. 8, 9. And when by the course of time those turnings are to happen in the world, the angels must have their share of service in them: The trumpets are sounded by angels, and the vials which are filled with the causes of such alterations are poured out by the hands of angels. Some indeed by the angels there mentioned, understand the visible instruments of reformation, not excluding the angels, who are the invisible ministers in the affairs of the world.*

5. They engage in this work for the church *with delight*, they act as God's ministers in his providence with unanimous consent; *Their wings were*

* Lightfoot, Temple, chap. 33. p. 253, 256.

joined one to another, Ezek. 1. 9. So that they perform their office with the same swiftness, and with the same affection, without emulation, to go one before another, which makes many actions succeed ill among men; but they go hand in hand. They do it with affection; both in respect of the kind disposition of their natures, and as they are fellow members of the same body, for they are parts of the church, and of the heavenly Jerusalem; *Ye are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, Heb. 12. 22,* and therefore act out of affection to that which is a part of their body, as well as out of obedience to their head. They do it in respect of their own improvement too, and increase of their knowledge, which is the desire of all intellectual creatures. For they complete their understandings by the sight of the methods of infinite wisdom in the perfecting his gracious designs.

And it is God's intent that they should grow in the knowledge of his great mystery by their employment; *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God;* i. e. by the gracious works of God toward the church, and in the behalf of it, for the security and growth of the church, and in the executions of those decrees which as instruments they are employed in. For I do not understand, how it can be meant of the knowledge of Christ, for that they know more than the church below can acquaint them with; for without question they have a clear insight into the offices of Christ who is the head, and whom they are ordered to worship. They understand the aim of his death and resurrection, and can better explain the dark predictions of scripture, than purblind man. But by observing the methods which God uses in the accomplishment of them, they become more intelligent, and commence masters of knowledge in a higher degree, which it is

probable is one reason of their joy, when they see God's infinite wisdom and grace in the conversion of a sinner; without affection to them, and their employment about them, they could not rejoice so much; and their rejoicing in their first bringing in to God, argues their joy in all their employments, which concerns their welfare.

PART VIII.

ALL EVIL THINGS FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH.

Wicked persons—Satan—Bad men—Sin—Commutations of the world—Destroying judgments—Divisions—Persecutions—Improve the church—Increase the church—Within its own bounds—In other parts—The reasons of this.

II. **AS** all good things, so *all bad things* are ordered by providence for the good of the church. That which in its own nature is an injury, by God's ordering puts on the nature of a mercy; and what is poison in itself, by the Almighty art becomes a sovereign medicine. Are God's dispensations in their own nature destructive? That wise physician knows how to make poisons work the effect of purifying. Are they sharp? It is to humble and purify the church? As shadows serve to set out the pictures, so the darkest passages of providence are made by God to commend the beauty of those glorious things he works for his church. We may see this in

(1.) *Bad persons.* As God manages Satan, with all his subtilty and his malicious power, for his own glory, and the strengthening of believers, *Matt.* 8. 31, 32. The devils desired to enter into the herd of swine, with an intent, probably, not only to destroy these swine, but to incense the Gadarenes against him, out of whom they had been cast, to do him

some considerable mischief. But what is the issue? As they discover their malice, so they enhance the value of Christ's kindness to the distressed man, whom he had freed from this tyranny; hereby also was the law of God justified, in commanding the Jews to abstain from swine's flesh, which the Gadarenes, being apostate Jews, had broken; he magnified his own power in routing such a number of unclean spirits, which had not been so conspicuous in the turning them out of one man, had not this regiment discovered themselves among the swine, and brought such a loss upon the Gadarenes; whereby, as they shewed their own strength and malice, so they discovered occasionally the greatness of Christ's charity, and his power over them; so that in granting the malicious petition of this exasperated legion, the law of God is justified, our Saviour's love glorified, his power manifested, and a foundation laid for the gaining proselytes in that country; to which purpose he left the man he had cured, and to strengthen the faith of those poor believers, which then followed him. God makes use of the devils by the sovereignty of providence, to bring about ends unknown to them for all their wisdom.

The malice of the devil against Job hath rendered him a standing miracle of patience for ever. They are *the rulers of the darkness of this world*, Eph. 6. 12. Not of the light of the world; they are the rulers of the wicked, and the undesigning servants of the saints. They are the rulers of the world, but subordinate to serve the providence of God; wherein God declares his wisdom by serving himself of the worst of his enemies. Satan thought he had brought a total destruction upon mankind, when he persuaded our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit; but the only wise God ordered it to bring about a greater glory to himself, and a more firm stability to his people, in introducing an everlasting covenant which could not be broken, and establishing their happiness

upon surer terms than it was settled in paradise. And in afterwards filling the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and the hearts of the Jews to crucify him; even by that way, whereby he thought to hinder the good of mankind, he occasionally promotes their perpetual redemption.

And I do not much question but those very principles which Satan had distilled into the Gentile world, of shedding human blood in sacrifices, for expiation of guilt; and the gods conversing with men in human ways, and the imagination of the intercession of the demons for them; the first out of rage against mankind, and both that and the other to induce them to idolatry, might facilitate the entertainment of Christ as the great expiatory Sacrifice, and the receiving of him as the Son of God, though in an human shape, and the belief of his intercession. God overrules Satan in all his operations, and makes him instrumental for good, where he designs hurt and mischief.

2. All the wicked in the midst of the church are for the good of it, either for the exercise of their grace, or security of their persons or interest; *When a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him, Pro. 16. 7.* Sometimes he will incline their hearts intentionally to favour, or order even their actions against them to procure their peace, contrary to their intentions. Sometimes God makes them his sword to cut his people, sometimes as medicine to promote their spiritual health, sometimes fire to melt and refine them, sometimes hedges to preserve them, sometimes a ransom to redeem them, *Pro. 21.*

18. A traveller makes use of the mettle of a headstrong horse to carry him to his journey's end. That wind which would overturn a little boat, the skilful pilot makes use of to drive his ship into the harbour, and the husbandman to cleanse his corn from the chaff. Though the ends of the workers, viz. God and wicked men, are different; yet the end of the work is but one, which is ordered by God's sovereign plea-

sure. It was promised in the promise of the gospel to the Gentiles; *God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant, Gen. 9. 27.* God shall allure Japhet, the Gentiles of Europe, to dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan the head of the cursed posterity, shall be servants to the church beside their will, and sometimes against it by an over-ruling hand. And Christ hath bought them to be his servants, *2 Pet. 2. 1,* and therefore hath the disposing of them, whether they voluntarily give up themselves to him or no. He is a Lord by purchase over them, who own him not as a Saviour. The hatred of the church's enemies sometimes conduces more to her good, than the affections of her worldly friends.

Now this often appears,*

In *furthering the gospel.* The Jews, who speak not of Christ among themselves, but with opprobrious terms, have been the exact preservers of the Old Testament, even to the very number of the letters; wherein christians have sufficient to confirm them in the belief of Christ's being the Messiah, and unanswerable arguments against their adversaries; whereupon Austin terms them *capsarios ecclesiæ*, such that carry the books of the children of great men after them to school. When the authority of the Revelations was anciently questioned, the church of Rome was instrumental to keep it in the number of canonical books, not thinking they should find their own church so plainly deciphered in it, to be the *mother of abominations.* To this we may refer the action of Ptolemy Philadelphus king of Egypt, in causing the scripture to be translated about three hundred years before the coming of Christ; through which the nations † might better discern, as it were through a perspective glass, the new star of Jacob which was shortly to arise: no doubt but many of the Gentiles by

* Helvicus contra Judæus. † Jackson, vol. 1. Fol. s. p. 62.

comparing the Old Scripture prophecies, which they now could read in the Greek language, might be more easily induced to embrace the gospel, and acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah, when it came to be divulged among them. Herod is the cause of the consultation about the place of Christ's birth; not for any good will he had to him, whom he intended to murder, but God makes use of this to clear up the truth of the prophecy concerning Bethlehem, the place of his birth, *Out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel, Matt. 5. 6.* And they certainly were not very good, who preached Christ out of envy, and propagated the gospel, wherein Paul rejoiced not in their sin, but in the providential fruit of it; *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; what then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, Phil. 1. 15, 18.*

Wicked men are made instrumental in furthering the *temporal good of the church*;

1. In its *preservation*. Wicked men are often serviceable to the church, as the filthy raven was to holy Elijah, or as the lion which would have devoured Sampson, is a store-house to provide him food. Pharaoh's design was to destroy Israel, and the daughter of that irreconcilable enemy, is directed by God to preserve Moses, who was to be the ruin of her family, the destruction of the Egyptian glory, and the deliverer of the church. She saves him out of charity, and God out of a wise design; she, by his education in the Egyptian learning, fits him for the court, and God for the deliverance of his church. Egypt had corn to relieve first Abraham, afterwards Jacob in a time of famine; the family wherein the church of God was only then bound up, *Gen. 10. 12.* Herod lies in wait for Christ's destruction, and Egypt, the most idolatrous country in the world, and an ancient enemy to God's church, affords him shelter. God makes Moab to *hide his outcasts*, and be

their covert from the face of the spoiler, *Isa.* 16. 3, 4.

Some think God's design in sending Jonah to Nineveh, to work so remarkable a change by repentance, was to soften some of their hearts, and the hearts of their posterity, to deal more tenderly with those gracious Israelites, who in the captivity of the ten tribes, some years after, should be their guests. God making thereby provision for his own people in that judgment which should come upon the nation. This God does sometimes by reviving the law of nature, and the common sentiments of religion in the hearts of natural men; whereby their own consciences bearing witness to the innocency and excellency of the church of God, put them upon thoughts for its security. Sometimes it is above their own sphere, and besides their own intentions. The whale which swallowed Jonah, intended him as food for his hunger, but proves an ark for his security. They understand their own aim, but not the design of God. The leech knows not the surgeon's design, who useth it for the cure of a disease. Sometimes their rage proves their own ruin, and the church's safety; as the leech bursts itself sometimes, and saves the patient. The very earth, the carnal world, *helps the woman*, the church, by swallowing up the flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth against her, *Rev.* 12. 16. Just as the old rags were the instruments whereby Jeremiah was drawn out of the dungeon.

2. In the *advancement* of the church, or persons eminent. Abner had a plot for bringing Israel to David's sceptre, which concurred both with God's purpose and promises, but sprung from an ill cause, a disdain to be checked by Ishbosheth, though his king, for an unjustifiable act, for having too much familiarity with one of Saul's concubines. *2 Sam.* 3. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And from this animosity he contrives the deposing of Ishbosheth, and the exaltation of David; yet dissembles the ground, and pretends

the promise of God to David; *For the Lord hath spoken of David, by the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*, ver. 18. He is the first engine that moves in this business, and by him and his correspondents after his death, ver. 17, the business is brought about by God's overruling hand, wherein his promise is accomplished, and David a type of Christ, and the great champion for the church against its enemies round about, is advanced. Very remarkable is the advancement of Mordecai, in order to the advancing the Jews as well as preserving them, when the very existence of all the visible church of God was on the brink of ruin. Haman ignorantly is the cause of this preferment of Mordecai, and at that time too, when he came to petition for his death; *He was come to speak to the king to hang Mordecai upon the gallows which he had prepared for him*, *Esther* 6. 4: the king asks him, what should *be done to the man whom the king delights to honour*, ver. 16. He imagines that the king's question respected himself, and lays out a scheme of what honour he was ambitious of, ver. 8, 9, which was by the king designed for Mordecai, and Haman made the herald to proclaim him; here Haman, not only a wicked man in himself, but the greatest enemy Mordecai and the church had, is made unwittingly an instrument to exalt Mordecai, and in him the whole church of God.

3. In enriching the church, or some persons in it, whereby it may become more serviceable to God. How wonderful was it, that when the Israelites were abominated by the Egyptians, God should so order their hearts that the Egyptians should lend them gold and jewels, and dismiss them with wealth as well as safety; and not so much as one person molest them, till they arrived at the Red Sea? The very gain and honour of the enemies is sometimes consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth; *Arise and*

thresh, O daughter of Sion, I will make thy horns iron, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people, and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth, Micah 4. 13 : This was when many nations were gathered against Sion, ver. 11 : *The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Prov. 13. 22.* And God sometimes makes the wicked, unknown to themselves, the factors for good men, into whose lap providence pours the fruit of their labour. God gave Cyrus the spoils of Babylon, and the treasures of Cræsus, to enable him to furnish the Jews with materials for building the temple ; *And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know, that I the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel, for Jacob my servant's sake, &c. Isa. 45. 3, 4.* That he might acknowledge him the God of Israel, and lay his wealth out in the service of God, and the service of Jacob his servant.

(2.) As bad persons, so *bad things* are ordered to the good of the church, whether they be *sinful evils*, or *afflictive*.

1. *Sin.*—A man's own sin. Onesimus runs from his master, and finds a spiritual father ; his being a runagate, is the occasion of his being a convert. By flying from his master, he becomes a brother in the Lord, *Phil. 10. 12, 16.* What Joseph's brethren sinfully intended for revenge against their brother, and security from their father's checks, who acquainted Jacob with their miscarriages, God ordered for the preservation of them who were the only visible church in the world. Their sin against their brother, contrary both to their intentions and expectations, became the means of their safety. God makes the remainders of sin in a good man, an occasion to exercise his grace, discover his strength, and shew his loyalty to God. *Other men's sins* are ordered for the good of the church. That might be in Sarah but

a heady passion, for hearing her son mocked by Ishmael, that made her so desirous to have the bond-woman and her first son thrust out; but God makes use of it to make a separation between Isaac the heir of the covenant, and Ishmael, that he might not be corrupted by any evil example from him; God orders Abraham to hearken to her voice, because in Isaac his seed should be called. *Gen.* 21. 10, 12; and 27. 43, 46. And the revengeful threatening of Esau was the occasion of Jacob's flight, whereby he was hindered from marrying with any of the people of the land, by whom he might have been induced to idolatry. Why should we mistrust that God that can make use of the lusts of men to bring about his own gracious purposes?

2. *Commutations* in the world. There is the eye of God, that eye which runs to and fro throughout the whole earth in the wheels of worldly motions, even in the most dreadful providences in the world, that stare upon men with a grim countenance. *Their wings were dreadful, and their wings were full of eyes, Ezek.* 1. 18. All the overturnings in the world are subservient to the church's interest, though they are not visibly so unless diligently attended.* God orders the confusions of the world, and is in the midst of the tumults of the people. *The Lord sits upon the flood, yea, the Lord sits King for ever, the Lord will give strength to his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace, Psal.* 29. 10, 11. He sits upon the flood as a charioteer in his chariot, guiding it with holy and merciful intentions to his people, to give them both strength and peace in the midst of them, and as the issue of them. By water and floods is frequently meant tumults and confusions in the world. If it were not so, why should our Saviour encourage his disciples and all their successors in the same profession, to lift up their heads when they hear of

* Broughton on Revelations 13. Sect. 177.

wars, if their redemption were not designed by God in them? They are all testimonies of the nearer approaches of Christ in power and glory to judge the earth, and glorify his people, *Luke* 21. 25, 26, 27, 28. God's great end in the shaking of nations, is the performing those gracious promises to his church which yet remain unaccomplished. These earthquakes in the world, will bring heaven to the church. The great revolutions in the eastern part of the world, the ruin of the Babylonian empire, the erecting the Persian, and all the means whereby it was brought about, God ordered, God foretold, God directed for Jacob's service. Cyrus, led by ambition, levies an army against Babylon; yet though he was a ravenous bird, he was to execute the counsel of God; *Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel, Isa* 46. 11, to be an instrument for the delivery of the captived Jews, and the restorer of the ruined temple. He had called him out by name to make a great revolution of the world. He foretold, by his prophet Isaiah many years before, the means he should use in the siege of Babylon to attain the victory, the very dividing Euphrates, which was the great confidence of the Babylonians. *That say to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up the rivers, Isa.* 44. 27; whereby it was as it were dried up for them to pass over the very opening of the gates. *And the gates shall not be shut, Isa.* 45. 1; the Babylonians in a presumptuous security had left them open, thinking it impossible the city could be taken, because of the river Euphrates; *I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight;* and what was the end of that great revolution and motion in that part of the world? *For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name, Isa.* 45. 4: this prophecy was, when Jerusalem and the temple were standing. God casts about long before his people needs, for their welfare in the great revolutions and changes of the world. *That*

saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid, Isa. 44. 28. Cyrus had no knowledge of this end of God; *Though thou hast not known me, Isa. 45, 4, 5,* twice repeated. Cyrus did not know God, neither did he know God's end; he acts his own purposes, and is acted by God to higher purposes than he understood. In all the siftings of nations, and *sifting the church among the nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve,* God designs not the destruction of his people, but the cleansing them, the separating the flour from the bran.

3. Destroying judgments, yea, and the very curses sometimes are turned into blessings.

Destroying judgments. The desolation of the Jews was not only in order to the fulfilling God's truth in his threatenings, but useful for the great gospel design; the fall of the Jews was the calling of the Gentiles. *Through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 11, 12;* and also their fall and dispersion among the Gentiles, was prophesied of as the occasion of their return to God. *Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness, so will I plead with you, and cause you to pass under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the covenant, Ezek. 20. 36, 37;* when they are in the wilderness of captivity, then God shall plead with them, and make them to pass under the rod of propriety, and bring them into covenant. The like also is prophesied of that captivity of the ten tribes, although to this day it is not known where they are. The time of God's speaking kindly to his church, should be in the wilderness; and then *I will give her the valley of Achor, for a door of hope, Hos. 2. 14.* No question but God hath performed his promise, and brought many of the posterity of the ten tribes into the church, among the mass of the Gentiles, among whom they were dispersed.

Curses sometimes, as God orders them, prove *blessings*. The curse of inspired Jacob upon Levi; *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel, Gen. 49. 7*, was the advantage both of Levi and the Israelites; that they were dispersed among the several tribes, without any universal cohabitation as the rest, was a curse; but that they should be the instructors of the people in the matter of the law, was an honour God put upon the head of that tribe, and a public blessing to the people.

4. *Divisions* in the church. One would think this of all other things should shake the foundation of it; yet God orders even these to the good of the church. Paul and Barnabas, two great apostles, fell out, *Acts* 15. 36, 37, 38, 39, &c. The contention comes to be very sharp, a thing naturally of very ill consequence, in two of the prime guides of christianity, and at the laying the first foundation of it; but the gospel gains ground; one sails to Cyprus, and the other travels into Syria, perhaps had not this quarrel been between them, and they thus disjointed from one another, some of those poor souls had never, or at least not so soon, have heard of the gospel-mercy.

5. *Persecutions*. These naturally tend to the dissolution and utter extirpation of it, but God orders them otherwise. God often lays the scene of his amazing providences in very dismal afflictions: as the limner first puts on the dusky colours, on which he intends to draw the portraiture of some illustrious beauty. The oppression of Israel immediately before their deliverance, was the dusky colour whereupon God drew those gracious lines of their salvation from Egypt, the pattern of all the after-deliverances of the church in all ages, and a type of our spiritual redemption by Christ. The humiliation, persecution, and death of the Son of God, was the dusky colour upon which God drew that amazing piece of divine

love and wisdom in man's salvation, which the eyes of saints and angels will be fixed on with ravishing admirations to all eternity. All afflictions in the world, with which God exercises the church, are parts of his providence, and are like mournful notes in music, which make the melody of the tune more pleasant, and set off those sweeter airs following them. Afflictions here, cause the joys of heaven to appear more glorious in the eyes of glorified saints. The persecutions of the martyrs did but heighten their graces, send them to the place of rest, and enlarge their robes of glory. God many times saves his people by sufferings, and brings them to the shore upon the planks of a broken ship, and makes that which was the occasion of their loss, to be a means of their safety: they sometimes evidence that which they would destroy. Herod's murdering the children to destroy him that was born King of the Jews, made his birth more conspicuous in the world. Snuffing the candle makes it burn the clearer.

They sometimes make for,

1. The *improvement* of the church. One of the sorest judgments God brought upon the Jewish church, is expressly asserted by God to be for their good; speaking of the captived Jews, *Whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, Jer. 24. 5.* The Chaldeans had overruun their land, carried them captives, made them slaves, destroyed the temple; yet God tells them this was for their good, when there was no present appearance of any good in it. It should be good in respect of God's favour towards them, which retired to return with the greater force; *I will set mine eyes upon them for good, I will build them, and not pull them down; ver. 6.* God will give them a more durable settlement. In respect also of that frame of heart they should have toward God; their knowledge of him, and cleaving to him; *I will give them a heart to know me, and they shall return to me with their whole heart,*

ver. 7. God had but a moiety of their hearts before, but then he should have the whole. And indeed it was remarkably for their good; for they who before were addicted to idolatry, were never guilty of the same sin after: And God kept them from being drawn away to it by the example and solicitation of those among whom they were. The church grows by tears, and withers by smiles. God's vine thrives the better for pruning. He makes our persecutions fit us for that for which we are persecuted. As Saul by his persecution of David for the title God had given him to the kingdom, made him fitter to succeed him in the throne, and manage the government. God uses persecutors as lances, which while they wound us, let out the purulent and oppressive matter; and makes them instruments of his providence to work out his people's happiness, and thus makes the very wrath of man to be an occasion of his people's praise; *The wrath of man shall praise thee, Psal. 76, 10.* God does in this as a father deals with his son, sends him to a sharp school, that he may be trained up in learning.

2. In the *increase* of the church. The Jews crucified our Saviour to diminish the multitude of his followers, and by this means the number is increased. The whole world runs after him by the means they used to stop their course; which Christ foretold, that when he was lifted up he should draw all men after him; and that a grain of corn brings not forth more seed, unless it be cast into the ground, and die.

Persecution promotes the increase of it *within its own bounds*. When the Israelites were most oppressed in Egypt, the more they multiplied; *Exod. 1. 20.* When the dragon's fury did most swell against the woman, she brought forth a man child; *Rev. 12. 1.* When the Roman empire was at the highest, and was most inflamed with anger against the christians: When the learning of the philosophers, the witchcrafts

of heretics, the power of the emperors, and the strength of the whole world was set against them, the christians grew more flourishing and numerous by those very means which were used to destroy them. Not only a new succession of saints sprung up from the ashes of martyrs, but their flames were the occasion of warming some so much with a heavenly fire, that some persecutors have become preachers. Their very bonds for the truth have sometimes a virtue in them to bring men to faith in Christ; *The things which have happened unto me, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. 1. 12.*

Persecution promotes the increase of it in *other parts*. Paul's prison made his preaching famous in Rome, and was an occasion of bringing christianity into Nero's court, that monster of mankind, *Phil. 1. 13; & 4. 22*; one might have looked for his saints in hell as soon; his bonds were as great a confirmation of the truth of his doctrine, as his eloquence. When Saul made havock of the church, and by that storm dispersed the christians, they like so many grains of corn scattered in several parts of a greater field, produced the greatest harvest; *Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word, Acts 8. 3, 4.* As clouds scattered by the winds, they rained down the gospel in several quarters. The Jews, when scattered in their several flights, scattered among the heathen the notions of the true religion. When they shall go down to Egypt to secure themselves from Sennacherib's invasion, they shall be a means to make many converts among that idolatrous nation; *In that day, the day of the Jews' trouble, shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts, Isa. 19. 18*: so one expounds it, but I rather think it is meant of the times of the gospel. The flight of the Israelites shall be the occasion of some Egyptians' conversion. A poor slave in Naaman's family was an oc-

casation both of the cure of his body, and that of his soul; *2 Kings* 5. 2, 3, 17. So much for the first reason, drawn from an enumeration of things.

Second reason; to prove that all providence is for the good of the church, is, because God hath sometimes preferred mercy to the church, and care of it, *above his own concernments of justice.* He values his mercy to them, above his justice upon his enemies. He consults their safety before he brings ruin upon the wicked whose sins are full. He first prepared the ark for Noah, and sees him lodged in it, before he begins to shower down destruction upon the world. He hath sometimes punished a nation more for their offences against his people, than their sins against himself. Amalek was guilty of many idolatries and other sins against God; but God chargeth none of them upon them, but their malicious hindering the Israelites in their march to Canaan; *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt,* *1 Sam.* 15. 2. He shews his love to them, and how much he values them, that when he is acting justice, and pouring out his wrath, when he is, as it were, cutting and slashing on all sides, and is in fury with wicked men, he hath nothing but sweetness and tenderness towards his own; in the sifting of Israel and the nations, *Not the least grain shall fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword,* *Amos* 9. 9, 10. While he thunders out his fury upon wicked men, he hath his eyes upon the least grain of the true Israel. What would it be for God, when he is raising the glory of his justice upon the people that have provoked him, not to regard the concernments of this, or that, or many sincere souls, but put no stop to his fury? Yet he does, and not a grain shall perish. He is more desirous to hear of the preservation and welfare of a few righteous, than of the just punishment of the wicked wherein his justice is gloriously in-

terested. The man clothed with linen, that was to mark the mourners, returned to God, and gave an account that he had done according to his command; the other five, which were to kill, returned not to give any account of their severe and sharp proceedings. *Ezek.* 9. 11. The angels that held the four winds of the earth, *Rev.* 7. 1, which some understand of wars and commotions in the world for the overthrow of the Romish power, were ordered not to let the winds go, till the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads.

3d. Reason; God takes particular notice of *the meanest of his people*, and mightily condescends to them, much more of the church. It is strange to consider that the scripture mentions none of those great potentates among the heathen, but either as they were instruments of his people's good, or executioners of his justice upon them, or subjects of his people's triumph. Cyrus and Darius are mentioned as their friends; Nebuchadnezzar, and Sennacherib, and others, as God's instruments in scourging them. *Gen.* 14: 9, 10, Chedorlaomer and the other kings with him, as they were the subjects of Abraham's valour and triumph. He takes no notice of the names of any in his word, but upon such accounts; Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar had done, no doubt, many actions before, but none are taken notice of but those; but he takes notice of the meanest wherein was grace, and the meanest of their concerns and actions.* He mentions in his word Jacob's flocks, &c. things of no great moment; the actions, speeches, and gestures of his people, to shew how his providence wrought for them, and how much he is concerned in the least of their affairs. But the great empires of the world, their original and progress, and the magnified founders of them, he speaks not of, but as they have some relation or other to his people. As we love to

* Revet in *Gen.* exercit. 129.

use the names of our friends, so does God love the names of his servants. The name of Noah is repeated several times, as the Jews observe, *Gen. 7,* and *8.* The spirit of God loves the very mention of their names; he delights to dwell upon the catalogue.

The scriptures reckon the genealogies of wicked men in short characters. Cain's generation is numbered in haste, as if God had no care at all of them, he puts them off with a kind of &c. *Gen. 4. 17, 18.* But he insists much upon the generation of the godly. Seth's posterity are written in a large scroll, and more legible hand, with the number of the years which they lived; which in Cain's posterity there is no notice taken of. *Gen. 5. 6, 7, 8, 9, &c.* His whole respect, his heart, his eye, his all is fixed upon them. And Christ himself stands more astonished, and wondering at the faith of the centurion, the importunity of the Canaanitish woman; condescends to them to grant them what they would have. You never find him taking notice of the learning of the rabbies, the magnificence of Herod, or the glorious building of the temple. See how condescending God is, to work a miracle for the support and strengthening of a weak faith, and the peevish distrust of his people. Gideon's faith was weak, yet how compassionate is God towards him, in ordering his providence as Gideon would have it, without upbraiding him; just as a tender mother cherishes a weak child? *He would have one time the fleece dry, another time wet; God condescends to them in all, Judges 6. 36, &c.* And this miracle was in order to the church's deliverance from a present oppressive enemy. Certainly when we find God taking care and ordering even the very pins, snuffers, and basins of the temple, the place of his worship, as well as the more stately ornaments of it; we may say, doth his care extend to the meanest utensils in his temple, and not much more to the worshippers in it? Does he give order for the candle

sticks, and will he not have much more care of the lights in them? His care to the least, implies his care of the greatest too. In a building, the little stones must be well laid, as well as the greatest. Every believer is a stone in the spiritual building.

4th Reason. God reveals often to his people what he will do in the world, *as if he seemed to ask their advice*, and therefore surely all his providence shall work for their good. God would not surely acquaint them, and advise with them, what he should do, did he intend to do any thing to their hurt. There is not any thing in the heart of Christ wherein the church is concerned, but he reveals it to them; *I have called you friends; for all things I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you, John 15. 5*; he discovered all to them, the ends of his coming, his Father's love, his death and resurrection, what he would do after his ascension, the progress of his affairs, and the glory of heaven, and the end of all. John must be the penman of the Revelation, which concerned the future state of the church in all ages. Joseph must know the interpretation of dreams in order to the church's preservation. Moses must be acquainted with God's methods in the Israelites' deliverance, with the Egyptians' ruin. Daniel must know the future state of the eastern parts of the world; he must know the turnings of the times, and the end of the world, *Dan. 10. 11, 19, 20*. It is to Noah, and none else, that he immediately discovers his intended destruction of the world. And all those revelations ended in his people's advantage; nay, he not only reveals, but, as it were, consults with him in his affairs.

God unbosoms himself to Abraham, as one friend to another, and seems to advise with him concerning his intention on Sodom; *And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? Gen. 18. 17*, i. e. I will by no means do it, it will not consist with my love and friendship to him, to hide any thing from him. And see the reason of it, *Seeing that Abraham*

shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him, ver. 18. It was first his great affection to him, because he had advanced him, and promised that a mighty nation should spring out of his loins. And he had not withheld from him the secret of giving the Messiah, which was a universal blessing, and so many ages were to run out, before it was to be accomplished; he had discovered to him his acts of mercy, and therefore would not hide from him his acts of justice; he would know his mind in it, and what he thought of it. And you know the story, how God regulated himself by Abraham's prayer, and denied him nothing, till Abraham left off suing any more. It would make one conjecture that if Abraham had proceeded farther, he had quite diverted the judgment from Sodom. And when the Israelites had provoked God by a golden calf, he would not do any thing against them till he had consulted Moses, and therefore lays the whole case before him, and seeks to take him off from pleading with the Lord, and promising to make of him a great nation, and in such terms that one would wonder at; *And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, Exod. 32. 9, 10.* Now therefore let me alone, as if God feared Moses's interposition would prevent him, and dissuade him from it. Do not you stand in the way; my wrath will cool if you interpose yourself; as much as to say, God would not do it unless Moses gave his consent. Moses would not be quiet, but pleads the providences of God which had been all for him, the promise of God made to Abraham concerning them; and he would not leave till God had repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people, ver. 14. If angels, as Calvin saith, are God's counsellors in heaven, believers are, as it were, his counsellors on earth.

5. God has given the *choicest things* he hath to

his people; he hath given his law. The church is the sphere wherein the light of the gospel is fixed, and wherein it shines, from whence its beams do dart out to others; *Out of Sion shall go forth the law, Isa. 2. 3.* The oracles of God, the great things of the law, as it is phrased, *Hosea 8. 12;* his covenant, and the counsel of his will are intrusted with the church. Now this being a mercy which exceeds all other things in the world, is therefore comprehensive of all other, as the greater comprehends the lesser; and the psalmist considers it as the top stone of all blessings; for after summing up the providences of God, he shews how God had distinguished Jacob by more eminent marks of his favour; *He shews his word to Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel, he hath not dealt so with any nation, Psal. 147. 19, 20,* he hath not left so rich a legacy to any, or given any so much of his heart. Others are ordered by the word of his power, for that is meant by *word* in the foregoing verse; but Jacob has the word of his grace too. And this being the choicest piece of affection which God hath shewed to the church, implies his making all lesser providences subservient to it. The church, wherein God hath laid up his gospel, and those souls which are as the ark, wherein God hath deposited his law, shall be shadowed with the wings of his merciful providence, in a perpetual succession of all true blessings. All the providences of God are to preserve his law in the world; his severest judgments are to quicken up the law of nature in men that know no other, and the law of his gospel in men that sit under it. And he hath given Christ to his church, and thereby hath given an earnest, that still their good shall be promoted. It is not to be thought that God will spare any thing else, when he hath given them his Son.

PART IX.

WHY ALL PROVIDENCES ARE FOR THE GOOD OF
THE CHURCH.

Providence glorifies the grace of God—All power of government given to Christ—For the good of the church—Actually administered for this end—The glory of God's attributes discovered in the church—His peculiar relationship to her—His interest in the world refers to his people—His affections—His presence—The power of the church's prayers—God will always have a church in the world—The folly and danger of contending against it.

THE second. *It must needs be* that all providences are for the good of the church.

1. All the providence of God is for the *glorifying his grace* in Christ. The whole economy or dispensation of the fulness of time, to the latter ages of the world, is for the gathering all things together in him; *That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him, Eph. 1. 10.* In him as their head. This was the design in all his dispensations, both before his coming, and since, ever since the promise made to Adam, though it be more manifest in the latter age. This the apostle represents as the main purpose of God, ver. 9. This was the mystery of his will, which according to his good pleasure he had purposed in himself, that is,

purposed in himself as a thing he was mightily pleased with; and ver. 11, saith he, he works all things after, or *κατὰ*, according to the counsel of his own will, or of that purpose which he had purposed in himself, to gather all things in one, in Christ. All the things that God acts, are referred to this as their end, and ordered by this counsel as their rule. As it was the design of God's providence to make way for Christ's entrance into the world, and all the prophecies in the old testament tended to the discovery of it; so since the coming of Christ, the end of all is to advance him in respect of his headship; *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all; Eph. 1, 22, 23.*

God would advance Christ to the highest pitch, ver. 21, far above all principality and power, both in this world, and in the world to come; and there is still a fulness wanting to Christ to complete him, not any personal fulness, but a fulness belonging to him as head, which is the advancement God designs him. He is already advanced above all principality and power. He is already given as a head to the church; but the completeness of it is not till all his members be perfected, to which all his providences in the world do ultimately tend: Therefore if the design of God be to honour Christ, and if the spiritual happiness of the church be part of that glory and fulness of Christ, it must needs be carried on by God, else he will want part of his completeness as a head: But this shall not be wanting, since, as all things are squared according to that counsel of glorifying Christ as head, so all things are acted for believers by that power whereby he raised Christ from the grave to be their head, which power is the copy according to which all acts which respect the church are framed; *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 up from the dead, ver. 19.

God intended the good of the church, in this very act of glorifying Christ, for he is made the *head over all things to the church*. As if God then had prescribed him that order, that the glory he gave him should be also managed for the church's interest: Christ is Lord of the rest of the world, but head of the church: All things are under his feet, but are not his members; he is head over all things to the church, and therefore to every member of the church, the least as well as the greatest; and to the whole church, even that part of it which is on earth, as well as that part which is in heaven, who are completed. This church is the fulness of Christ; he would be bodiless without it; therefore since Christ will be a head without a body, if the church be not preserved; in order to the preservation of it, all things must necessarily concur by the wise disposal of affairs. Therefore since they are travelling to be where their head is, he having the government of the world, will make all things contribute assistance to them in their journey; that Christ may have that completeness of glory, which God intends him: he expressly tells his father, *that he is glorified in his people, John 17. 10.* And at the sound of the seventh trumpet, *the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever, Rev. 11. 15.*

Now since all the motions in the world are, that the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdoms of his Christ, peculiarly his, as being anointed king by him; it must needs be, that all things must be subservient one time or other to this end, wherein the good of his people consists; otherwise they would not bless God so highly for it as they do; *We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned, Rev. 11. 17.* And where there is a resistance of this glory of Christ,

it is a natural effect of that decree whereby Christ is constituted king, that the resisters should be broken in pieces, and dashed like a potter's vessel, *Psal.* 2. 6, 9; and the issue of all is the blessedness of those that put their trust in him, ver. 12. The care that God hath of Christ and the church in the types of them, seems to be equal. The ark, which was a type of Christ, and the table of shew-bread a figure of the church, had three coverings; whereas all the rest of the vessels, &c. belonging to the ceremonial part, had but two: on the ark there was the vail and covering of badgers' skins, and a covering of blue: On the table of shew-bread there was a cloth of blue, a cloth of scarlet, and a covering of badgers' skins; *Numb.* 4. 5, 6, 7, 8. God orders as much for the security of the church, as for the security of Christ; therefore the same things that tend to glorify Christ, shall tend to the advantage of the church.

2. God hath given the power of the providential administration of things to *Christ to this very end*, for the good of the church. If God hath constituted him head over all things to the church, can there be any doubt but that he will manage the government for that which is the principal end of his government, for which he hath shed his blood, and which is chiefly intended by God who appointed him?

All power of government is given to Christ, *Matt.* 11. 27. *All things are delivered to me of my Father. And the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; John* 5. 22, that is, the whole government and administration of affairs. It is not to be understood of the last judgment, for then it would be a limitation of that word all; not that the Father lays aside all care of things, but as the Father discovers himself only in him, so he governs things only by him. All this power was committed to him upon his interposition after the fall of man. He was made Lord and Christ, that is, anoint-

ed by God to the government of the world. For upon the fall, God as a rector, had overturned all. Man could not with any comfort have treated with the Father, had not Christ stepped in and pleaded for the creation, whereupon God commits all judgment to the Son, that he might temper it. It was by Christ as a covenanting Mediator, that the earth was established, *Isa.* 49. 8. He had this government anciently, and it was confirmed to him upon his death; *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, Heb.* 1. 3. Calvin understands the first word not only of the Deity of Christ, but of the discovery the Father made of himself in and through him as Mediator. The latter words some understand both of his providential and mediatory kingdom: *by the word of his power*; this, say some, is referred to the Father, whose image Christ is, as acting by a delegated authority and commission from his Father; others, to Christ; as, that Christ upholds or bears up all things by his own powerful word. Calvin thinks both may be taken, but embraceth the second as being more generally received.

I may offer, whether it may not be meant also, of the powerful interposition of Christ as Mediator; whose interest in God was so great, that he kept up the world by his powerful intercession, when all was forfeited; and God put it, upon that interposition, into his hands, as *heir of all things*; (who having a hand with him in creation, understood both the rights of God, and the duty of the creature) upon the condition of purging sin by his death, which he did, and thereupon went to heaven to take possession of the government, at the right hand of God: *sat down*, took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High, as due to him by covenant and articles agreed on between them. I know nothing at present against such an interpretation of the words; but I will not contend about it. All this

honour was confirmed unto him upon his death. For having performed the condition requisite on his part, God deposes him and entrusts him with the government of things, that he might order all things so, as to see the full travail of his soul.

All this power was *intended* by God for this end, the good of the church. As God appointed Christ a Priest for his church to sacrifice for them, a Prophet to teach them; so the other office of King is conferred upon him for the same end, the advantage of the church. God acquaints us with this end aimed at by him, in the promise of the government to him; *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up to David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land; what is the end? In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. Job. 33. 15, 16.* He should execute judgment, that is, administer the government for the salvation of Judah, and security of Jerusalem. It was his office both to build the temple, and to bear the glory, and to rule upon his throne, to be a priest upon his throne, to rule as king and priest; *He shall build the temple of the Lord, even he shall build the temple of the Lord, Zach. 6. 12, 13.* The erecting a church is the sole work of Christ by God's appointment. And he was to bear up the glory of it. He should rule to this end; *for the counsel of peace shall be between them both.* If by both be meant, the Lord, and the man whose name is the Branch; it then chiefly aims at our reconciliation as wrought by covenant between them. If by both be meant the two offices of king and priest, and that the counsel of peace be between them; it will extend to all the blessings of the church, to the good and glory of the church, which is the fruit of his kingly, as well as the first reconciliation was the fruit of his priestly office.

By peace, in scripture, is meant the confluence of all blessings; so that the intent of God in bestowing those offices upon Christ, and so great a rule, was for

the good and advantage of that church or temple, which he appointed him only to build. And in Isaiah 11. 9, where the prophecy of the government of Christ is, the end is expressed to be, that none should *hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain*. And certainly, since God set him at his right hand, and confirmed this power unto him, after he had *purged our sins*; it was certainly out of the high value God had for him, and therefore must be the intent of God, that he should govern all things in reference to the design of that death, and for the good of those whose sins he had by himself purged. For the possessing this government, was the very end why Christ died and rose again; *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*, Rom. 14. 9. If this were Christ's end in dying and rising, it was his Father's end too, who appointed him to death, and raised him by his mighty power. And since he was *delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification*, Rom. 4. 25.

The government he is invested with, being Lord of the dead and of the living, must be for the sakes of those for whom he was delivered, and for whom he rose. His regal power, which was one end of his death, cannot cross the other main end, the constituting a church, and carrying on the good of them that believe. The government being in the hands not of God as Creator, but in and through the hand of a Mediator, and that Mediator which both died and rose again peculiarly for them; therefore it cannot in the least be for their hurt, but advantage. The whole management of Christ's kingly office in relation to the church is prescribed unto Christ by God. God reveals to him what shall be done in the world, what acts he shall perform for the church, and gives him a history of all that was to be done upon the stage, together with an order to communicate it unto his servants; *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God*

gave unto him, to shew unto his servants, to be communicated to the whole church, things that must shortly come to pass, Rev. 1. 1. Whether this Revelation was made to the human nature of Christ at his incarnation, as Tirinus thinks, or rather upon his ascension, is not material; the whole scheme of what was to be done in the world, is revealed here by God to Christ; and you find all the motions in the world relating to the church, and the end of all is the good of the heavenly Jerusalem.

All power thus given, and intended for this end, is *actually administered* by Christ for this end. Christ as the head of the church, does like a natural head; it never sees, nor hears, nor exerciseth any act of sense only for itself, but for the good of the whole body; the eye watches for the body, the tongue speaks for it, the understanding contrives for it; every part of the head is active for the whole body. Now Christ as head is more bound to act for the church militant, than for the church triumphant; because the greatest part of his work for the church triumphant, viz. the bringing them to heaven, is already performed. And they are above the reach of all things in the world, and all the actions and motions in the world cannot touch or disorder them. But the command of God concerning the other part behind, is not yet performed; and even they are the members of Christ, as well as those in heaven. The apostle, *Col. 1. 16, 17, 18,* seems to refer both Christ's creation, and the preservation of things, to this title of headship. *All things were created by him, and for him; and by him all things consist, and he is the head of the body, the church,* and therefore the conservation and government of all things shall be subservient to the church, which is the body of this governing head. The chief seat of Christ's sovereignty is the church, *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Sion, Psal. 2. 6;* and he stands upon Mount Sion, *Rev. 14. 1.*

The church is the proper seat and metropolis of his empire, the royal chamber of this great king.

All the conquests of princes redound to the advantage of that place, where they fix their residence. He is king of the world, but for the sake of Sion. Christ managed this charge anciently for his people; when Joshua had passed over Jordan, and first entered upon the conquest of Canaan, he sees a man over against him with a sword drawn in his hand; *And Joshua said unto him, art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, nay, but as captain of the hosts of the Lord am I now come, Joshua 5. 13, 14.* This was Christ, that came armed for his people according to his charge, as their captain and general. It was not an angel, because Joshua worshipped him, ver. 14. An angel did not use to receive any worship from men; and he accepts the worship, and commands him to loose his shoe from his foot, for the place whereon he stood was holy, ver. 15. And the same person, *Josh. 6. 2,* is called Jehovah; and there he gives him orders how he should manage his war. Christ came here to direct his people in their concerns; he employs his wisdom for his church, as well as his other excellencies. He is called a *counsellor*; and this, as the rest of the titles there mentioned, has a relation to the church; *For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, Isa. 9. 6.*

And the first use he makes of his power, after the confirmation of it to us, upon his resurrection, is for the church; *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, Matt. 28. 10.* all authoritative power over angels, and the affairs of the world; *Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c. and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* He commands the apostles to gather a church among all nations; and doth, by virtue of this authority committed to him, promise his presence with them, in all such services they should do to this end, even to the end of the world. He promises his Spirit and his providential presence; as his power should endure to the

end of the world, so the exercise of it for this end should run parallel with the continuance of it; there should be no alteration or change in this great end of his, as long as the world lasts. How can Christ be with them, and that to the end of the world, if all the parts of his providential government were not ordered to serve this end, the good of the church? for the church is *the fulness of him that fills all in all*, *Eph. 1. 23*, that fills all in all places, all in all actions and motions, for the good of his church, which is his body.

3. God in the church discovers the glory of all his attributes. It is in a man's house where his riches and state is seen; it is in the church God makes himself known in his excellency more than in all the world besides; *In Judah is God known, his name is great in Israel, in Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion*, *Psal. 76. 1*. It is in his church he doth manifest his power; it is called therefore *a glorious high throne*; *a glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary*, *Jer. 17. 12*. Kings use to display all their glory and majesty upon their thrones; in this sense heaven is called God's throne, *Isa. 60. 1*, because the prospect of the heavens affords us discoveries of the wisdom and power of God, more than in any other visible thing, both in their essence, magnitude, and motion. So is there a greater discovery of God's attributes in the church (which is also styled heaven in scripture) than in the whole world besides. There it is that the angels look to learn more of the wisdom of God than they understood before, *Eph. 3. 10*. It is there the day of his power dawns, *Psal. 110. 3*; it there his saints see his power and his glory, *Psal. 63. 2*; the sanctuary is called the firmament of his power, *Psal. 150. 1*.

The glory of God's attributes is centered in Christ in a higher manner than in the creation; and in that work did excel themselves in what they had done in

the framing of the world; and the church being the glory of Christ, all those attributes which are glorified in Christ, do in and through him shine forth more clearly upon the church, than upon any other part of the world. He styles himself their Creator, as much as the Creator of the whole frame of heaven and earth; *I am the Lord, your holy One, the Creator of Israel your king, Isa. 43. 15.* As though all the attributes of God, his power in creation, his holiness in redemption, were designed for none else but them. And indeed by virtue of the covenant they are to be so; for if God be their God, then all of God is theirs. What wisdom, power, sufficiency, grace, and kindness he hath, is principally for them. If God be their God, it is in their concerns he will glorify himself as a God, in the manifestation of his perfections. This cannot be without the ordering all providences for their advantage.

4. There is a *peculiar relation* of God and Christ to the church; upon which account this doctrine must needs be true. God is set out in all relations to manifest his great care of his people. He is a *Father* to provide for them; a *mother* to nurse them; Christ is a *husband* to love and protect them; a *brother* to counsel them. And when all these relations meet in one and the same person, the result of it must be very strong. Any one relation where there is affection, is a great security; but here all the relations are united together with the highest affections of them in God to the church. A father will order all for the good of his child; a mother for her infant; a husband for his wife; and one kind brother for another; so does God for his people; and whatsoever those relations bind men to on earth, in respect of care, love, and faithfulness, that is God to his church. The church hath the relation to God, which none in the world have besides. They are his jewels, therefore he will keep them; they are his children, therefore he will spare them, *Mal. 3. 17.* They shall have protection from

him as they are his jewels, and compassion from him as they are his sons. The church is Christ's flesh, as dear to him as our flesh is to us; as much his as our flesh is ours; *No man hates his own flesh, but nourisheth it, as Christ doth his church, Eph. 5. 29.* No man can have a higher value for his own flesh, than Christ hath for his church. The church, as Tertullian speaks, is nothing else but *Christus explicatus*;^{*} and as considered in union with Christ, is called Christ, *1 Cor. 12. 12*; it is the *apple of his eye, Zach. 2. 8*; a tender and beloved part. The church is Christ's spouse; the contract is made, the espousal shall be at the last day. The members are picked out one by one to be presented to the Lamb at last as a glorious bride for him, *Rev. 21. 2.*

And all God's dealings with them in the world, are but preparations for that state. Upon forming the union, God promises a communion of goods; *I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, Hos. 2. 20,* which is a fruit of marriage, the wife being invested in her husband's estate. When God hath given the blood of his son for the church, he will not deny her the service of the creatures, but jointure her in that as one part of her dowry; *In that day will I hear the heavens, &c. ver. 21.* In what day? In the day of betrothing, in the day of the evangelical administration; when the contract shall be made between me and my church. Heavens, earth, corn, wine, and oil, the voice and motions of all creatures are for Jezreel, which signifies the seed of God. This great prince as he hath a care of all his subjects, so more peculiarly of his spouse and princess, which is his seed too; and all creatures shall be her servants. This fatherly relation and affection is strong and pure, not as the love which acts an ambitious man to ambition, or a covetous man to wealth, which respects nothing but the grasping and possessing the objects they doat upon, and have no-

* Christ unfolded.

thing of love for the objects themselves, therefore deserves not the name of love. But it is the love of a father, whose love is pure towards his children; he seeks their good as his own.

Consider, here these two things:—1. God hath a *peculiar love* to this very relation, and often mentions it with delight, as if he loved to hear the sound of it in his own lips; *My vineyard which is mine, is before me, Cant. 8. 12.* The church is always under his eye, seated in his affection; and God is pleased with his propriety in them. God never calls the world, my world, though he created it; sometimes he saith, the earth is mine, but it is either to check the presumptions of men, who ascribe that to themselves which is due to the first cause; or to encourage his people in the expectation of deliverance, because all things in the earth are at his beck; or to shew his own sufficiency, without the services of his people; as when he saith the earth is mine, and the fulness thereof; but it is never mentioned in such a way as to discover any pleasure he has in the relation between him and it, simply considered; but *my vineyard, my people, my children, my jewels, my sanctuary*, very often. So much does God esteem his propriety in them.

2. This relation is *prevalent with God* in the highest emergencies and distresses of his people. The very consideration that they are his people kindles his affection, and enlivens his strength for them; *And he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour, Isa. 63. 8.* God is brought in as one that had heard the cries of his church, and had not been moved; but when he recollects himself, and considers that they were his people, and that he was in a special manner related to them, he became their Saviour: he could no longer bear it, but stirs up himself to relieve them. Nay, it hath so strong an influence upon him, that if this note be often sounded in his ears, it as it were changes his voice; and when he seems to have a mind to cast them off, he cannot.

When Israel had offended by erecting and worshipping a golden calf, he calls them no more his people, but the people of Moses; *And the Lord said unto Moses, go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves, Exod. 32. 7.* As though God had not been concerned in this miraculous conduct out of Egypt; and, ver. 9, *this people*; as if he had had no interest in them, but particularizes them with disdain. God had here discarded them, and turned them over upon the hands of Moses, as if he would have no longer any thing to do with them; but Moses in prayer turns them upon God again, and would not own them as his, but pleads that they were God's proper goods; *Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, ver. 11*; and again, ver. 12, *thy people*; and God at last resumes his former notes, *And the Lord repented him of the evil he thought to do unto his people, ver. 14.* Now they are God's people again; the repetition of this relation, is a powerful rhetoric to persuade him to own them again, which he had cashiered and turned off.

5. *The whole interest of God in the world* lies in his church and people. He sees little of himself, in any part of the corrupted world, but only in them. It is in the church he hath put his name; it is there he sees his image, and therefore places his love there, and shall all this signify nothing? Shall the governor of the world let things go contrary to his own interest? They are like to him in that which is one of his greatest perfections, viz. his holiness; which gives him a greater interest in them. It is his interest that is opposed, by an opposition to the church. All the hatred any bear, grows from the inward root of enmity against God himself: yea, *For thy sake are we killed all the day long, Psal. 44. 22.* God surely will concern himself in the church's interest, since it is his own.

His interest lies, in the *persons* of his people. It is his inheritance, *Isa.* 19. 25. It is his portion: *The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance, Deut.* 32. 9. Every part of an inheritance and a portion, as particularly belongs to the owner, as the whole. Every part of the ground which belongs to the inheritance; is the heir's, as well as the whole field. He will not suffer the world which is but the work of his hands, to lay waste his church, which is his proper inheritance. It is his treasure, and where a man's treasure is, there is his heart: and where God's treasure is, there is God's heart.

God is interested in the *services and actions* of the church. If the church should be destroyed, whom has God to love and imitate him, and to shew forth his glory? If the candlestick is broken, what is fit to hold out the light to the world? He has none in the world besides that intentionally mind his honour, that take pleasure in glorifying his name, and writing after his copy, and observing his works. And will it stand with his interest to govern things contrary to theirs, which is really his own?

When God had made the world, and pronounced it good, what would it have signified, if he had not brought in man as his steward, and the collector of his tribute, to return it to him? And what would man signify; since the corrupted world embezzles that which is God's right, and turns it to its own use; if God had not some honest stewards, who faithfully act for him, and give him the glory of his works? And God will spare them *as a man spares his own son that serves him.* God has no voluntary service in the world but from them; therefore he is more interested in their good, than in the good of the whole world besides. The services of the church, are all the delight God hath in the world. *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I saw your father's as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her first time, Hos.* 9. 10. They are as

the refreshing wine and grapes, as the delicious fruit of the first ripe figs; wherewith a weary traveller recruits his spirits after a long and tiring journey.

And God hath a greater delight in the fruit he receives from the church, than in it simply as it is his inheritance; for no inheritance is valued but for the fruit and revenue it yields; and therefore God orders all his blackest providences in the world, like dark clouds, to be the watering-pots of this his garden; that the fruit and flowers of it may be brought to maturity, which yield him so much pleasure and honour. God only is acknowledged by them and in them, as the Jews were bound to acknowledge God the author of their mercies, by presenting the first-fruits of their increase to God. And believers are called so; *These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and the Lamb, Rev. 14. 4.* It is by and in them that God hath the acknowledgment of all his mercies and blessings to the world.

6. It cannot be but all the providences of God shall work to the good of his church, if we consider *the affections of God.*

1. His *love.* What hath God in the world as an object to bestow his affections upon, and communicate the rays of his love unto, since he created it, but his church? The men of the world hate him: he can see nothing amiable in them; for what was first lovely, they have defaced and blotted out; but the church hath God's comeliness put upon her: *It was perfect through my comeliness which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God, Ezek. 16. 14;* and he did not lay those glorious colours upon her, to manage his government, or any part of it against her, to deface her. Besides their loveliness which is conferred upon them by God, they have a love to God, and no man will act against those whom he thinks to be his friends. God being *purus actus*, there being nothing but purity and acti-

vity in God, his love must be the purest and highest love, the most vigorous and glowing: as fire, which sets all other bodies, so this all other powers in the world in motion for them. God cannot love them, but he must wish all good to them, and do all good for them; for his love is not an indolent love, but is united with his almighty power to work that good for them, which in their present condition in the world they are capable of. Now it is certain, God loves his church: for,

He carries them in his hand, and that not in a loose manner to be cast out, but they are engraven upon the palms of his hands, that he cannot open his hand to bestow a blessing upon any person, but the picture of his church is presented to his eye. *Deut.* 33. 3. *Isa.* 49. 16. God alludes to the rings wherein men engrave the image of those that are dear to them. And the Jews in their captivity engraved the effigies of their city Jerusalem upon their rings, that they might not forget it.* If his eye be always upon the church, his thoughts can never be off it in any of his works.

He loves the very *gates and outworks* of his church; *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion, Psa.* 87. 2. He loves a cottage where a church is, more than the stately palaces of princes. The gates were the places where they consulted together, and gave judgment upon affairs; God loved the assemblies of his saints, because of the truths revealed, the ordinances administered, the worship presented to him.

Nay, one saint is more valued by him than *the whole world* of the wicked. God is the God of all creatures, but peculiarly the God of Abraham, and of his seed; one Abraham is more deeply rooted in his heart, than all the world; and he more entitles himself *the God of Abraham*, than the God of the whole world; for in that style he speaks to Isaac; *I am*

* Sanctius in *Isa.* 49. 16.

the God of Abraham thy father, Gen. 26. 24; much more the God of Israel; the God of the whole church, of which Abraham was but a member, though the father of the faithful, and a feoffee of the covenant. God has a greater value for one sincere soul, than for a whole city: He saves a Lot, and burns a Sodom: yea, than for a whole world; he drowns a world, and reserves a Noah; he secures his jewels, whilst he flings away the pebbles.

He loves his people so, that he *overlooks* their *crabbed and perverse misconstructions of his providence*. When the Israelites had jealous thoughts of him, and of Moses his instrument, when they saw that mighty Egyptian army just at their heels, and themselves cooped up between mountains, forts, and waters, God does not upon this provoking murmuring, draw up his cloudy pillar to heaven, but puts it in the rear of them, when before it had marched in the van, and wedgeth himself in between them and Pharaoh's enraged host, to shew, that they should as soon sheath their swords in his heart, as in their bowels; and if they could strike them, it should be through his own Deity, which was the highest expression of his affection; and though they often murmured against his providence after they were landed on the shore, yet he left them not to shift for themselves, but bore them all the way in his arms, as a father doth a child; and bare them like an eagle upon his wings. *Deut. 32. 11.* And God loves them magnificently and royally; *I will love them freely, Hos. 14. 4*; * without any doubting, without any reluctancy. I will love thee without any repugnancy in my heart, to draw me back from thee, *for my anger is turned away*, as the streams of a river quite another way. Now all this considered, can the Governor of the world, the King of saints, act any thing against his own affections?

* נדבה Sept. ὁμολόγως.

Yea, will he not make all things subservient to them whom he loves ?

2. His *delight*. See what an inundation of sweetening joy there was in him, for which he had not terms of expression to suit the narrow apprehensions of men ; *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing, Zeph. 3. 17.* He seems in his expression to know no measure of his delight in the church, and no end of it ; *I will rejoice over thee with joy.* Joy sparkles up fresh after joy ; It is his rest where his soul and all that is within him centres itself with infinite contentment. *Joy over thee with singing ;* a joy that blossoms into triumph. Never had any such charming transports in the company of any he most affected, as God hath in the church ; he so delights in the graces of his people, that he delights to mention them. He twice mentions Enoch's walking with him. *Gen. 9. 22, 24.* And certainly God cannot but delight in it more than in the world, because it is a fruit of greater pains than the creation of the world. The world was created in the space of six days by a word ; the erecting a church hath cost God more pains and time. Before the church of the Jews could be settled, he had both a contest with the peevishness of his people, and the malice of their enemies. And his own Son must bleed and die, before the church of the Gentiles could be fixed. Men delight in that which hath cost them much pains, and a great price. God hath been at too much pains, and Christ at too great price, to have small delight in the church ; will he then let wild beasts break the hedges, and tread down the fruit of it ? Shall not all things be ordered to the good of that which is the object of his greatest delight in the world ?

7. The *presence* of God in his church will make all providences tend to the good of it.

It would be an idle useless presence, if it were not

operative for their good. *The Lord is there*, is the very name of the gospel church, *Isa.* 48. 35: what would it signify if it were a useless presence? Christ stands upon mount Sion; his throne is in the church, when the great things in the world shall be acted for the ruin of antichrist. *Rev.* 14. 1. God's presence in his church, is the glory and defence of it; as the presence of the king is the glory of the court; *For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her, Zach.* 3. 5. His presence is a covenant-presence. *Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God, Isa.* 41. 10: whence follows strength, help, and support; *I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness*: that is, with my righteous power, with my power engaged to thee in a righteous covenant. His presence and providence in the world, is in a way of absolute dominion; but in his church in a way of federal relation. He is the God of Israel, and God to Israel, or for Israel; yea, and a God in the midst of Israel. *1 Chron.* 17. 24. Every one of them sufficient engagements to protect Israel, and provide for Israel, and govern every thing for Israel's good. God is under an oath to do good to Israel; and will he violate his oath? tear his seal? break his covenant, who never broke his league with any of his people yet?

8. The *prayers* of the church have a *mighty force* with God to this end. God is entitled a God hearing prayer, and what prayers should God hear, if not the prayers of his church, which aim at God's glory in their own good? Though the prayers of the church may in some particulars fail, yet in general they do not; because they submit their desires to the will of God, which always works what is best for them.

When God would do any mighty work in the world, he stirs up his people to pray for it; and their prayers by his own appointment have a mighty

influence upon the government of the world: For when they come before him in behalf of the church in general, he indulges them with greater liberty and boldness, and as it were a kind of authority over him, than upon other occasions of their own: *Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of mine hands command you me, Isa. 45. 11.* God would be more positively, confidently, and familiarly dealt with, about the concerns of his sons, though they were things to come to pass in after ages. And indeed the prayers of the church have a powerful and invisible efficacy on the great actions and overturnings which are in the world.

The being of the world is maintained by them from sinking, according to the Jews' saying, *sine stationibus non subsisteret mundus*; standing in prayer was their usual prayer-gesture. And that they have actually such a force is evident, *Rev. 8. 3, 5.* An angel hath a golden censer with incense, to offer it with the prayers of the saints, upon the altar which was before the throne. And ver. 5, the censer wherein their prayers were offered, was filled with the fire of the altar, and cast into the earth; and there were voices, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes. When the prayers of the saints were offered to God, and ascended up before him, that is, were pleasing to him; the issue is, the angel fills the censer with the fire of the altar, and thereby causes great commotions and alterations in the world; signifying that the great changes of the world are an answer to those prayers which are offered to God; for fire is taken from that altar upon which they were offered, and flung into the world. And it must needs be that the prayers of the church should have an influence on the government of the world.

Because God hath a mighty *delight* in the prayers of his people. The prayer of the upright is his delight, and he loves to hear the church's voice; O

my dove, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, Cant. 1. 14; thy voice is sweet in prayer. In the times of the gospel, God promises that the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem should be pleasant to him, *Mal. 3. 4.* When Christ shall sit as a refiner, ver. 3, what is the issue of those prayers? *I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, &c.* ver. 3. Prayer awakes providence to judge the enemies of the church: a parent delights, not in the bare crying, or the voice of his child simply considered in itself, but in the significations and effects of it. He delights in the matter of their prayers, it being so agreeable to his own heart and will, and in the sense they have of the sufferings of the whole body.

The prayers of the church must influence the government of the world, because prayer is nothing else but *pleading God's promises.* Unto this they are directed by that Spirit which knows the mind of God, and marshals their petitions according to his will. Now as God turns his own decrees and purposes concerning his church into promises to them, so the church turns those promises into prayers for them; so that promises being for the good of the church, and there being an exact harmony between those promises and the church's prayers, all those providences which are the issue of those promises and the answer of the church's prayers, must needs be for the church's good.

Again, the prayers of the church must influence the government of the world, because there are *united supplications and pleadings both in heaven and earth;* all the hands of the whole family in heaven and earth are concerned in their petitions.

Christ intercedes for the church, who always desires mercy and deliverance for them in the appointed time; *How long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem?* *Zech. 1. 12,* and the issue is always gracious: For, ver. 13, God answers him with good and comfort-

able words ; and thereupon carpenters are raised to cut off the *horns which had scattered Judah*, ver. 20.

And the *angels* too in all probability plead for the church, as we have already heard ; it is likely they offer and present that to God which makes for his glory, and that is the good of the church. Angels surely desire that which their head does, which is described as one of their own order, and called an angel, *Zech. 1. 12.* Do they rejoice at the repentance of a sinner, and do they not likewise triumph at the happiness of the church, which is part of that family to which they belong ? And we know that the greatness of our joy is suited to the mercies of our desires ; where our joy is most triumphant, it implies that our desires before were most vehement.

3. *Glorified saints* are not surely behind. The rich man in the parable desired his friend on earth might not come into that place of torment, *Luke 16. 28.* If there be so much charity in hell, can there be less in heaven ? If he desired it, that by the presence of his companions in sin, his own torments might not be increased ; do not the saints in heaven desire the presence of the whole church, that their happiness in that of the whole body may be completed ? If the head (Christ) be not complete without the body, the members of the body cannot be complete without one another. The souls of them that were slain for the word of God, cry under the altar for vengeance on them that dwell on the earth, as *Revel. 6. 9, 10.* *How long, O Lord holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? Will not their kindness to their fellow members, be as strong as their justice ? And their love for the good of their friends draw out their prayers as well as their desire of vengeance on their enemies ? Why may they not as well pray for us, as we praise God for them ? Had they not some likeness to their great Master whilst they were on earth, and shall they not be more like to him now*

they are in heaven, and behold his face, and feel all the stirrings of his heart?

And if they have no sense at all of the church's sufferings, how shall they be like to him who hath? As their bodies shall be like the glorious body of Christ at the resurrection, are not their souls now like his glorious soul, merciful, and compassionate, and sympathizing in all the afflictions of the church? And can this be without some breathings for a full completing of the church's freedom? Are such desires and pleas any hinderance to their present happiness? It is so far from that, that it rather furthers their glory, which cannot be complete, as the glory of Christ, as head, is not mounted to the highest pitch of glory, till his mystical body be all gathered in and lodged with him. If it be thus, will God do any thing prejudicial to the church, and contrary to the combined desires of all those that are so near him? If God sometimes stirs up himself upon the supplication of one man, and grants an order upon his petition according to his mind; and if the prayers of one faithful Moses, or Elias, or Samuel have such a kind of almighty power in them, much more is the joint force of so many prayers united together.

We come now to the improvement. I. For information. Is it so that all providence is for the good of the church? Then,

1. God *will always have a church* in the world, he will have some to serve him. The whole course of his providence being designed for it; as long as the world, which is the object of his providence endures, he will have a church. God would otherwise lose the end of his presence in the world, the operation of his providence, since it is to show himself strong for the church and every member of it. As long as the candle and light of the gospel burns and shines, God will have a candlestick to set the candle in.* His

* Cham. les traits verit. liv. 3 chap. 1. p. 16.

great design in making a world, was not to have sun, moon, and stars, but a church, a company of men that might bear his mark, and honour him, to whom he might speak, and extend his grace abroad, which he was so full of within. As a limner, who would draw an excellent draught, draws his design in the midst of the cloth, and fills the void places with clouds, and landscapes, and other fancies at his pleasure, which communicate some beauty and lustre to the work: but that was not the principal design of the workman. That Redeemer which bears the church upon his heart, will create stability for it; it is a part of his priestly office to take care of the lamps: it is one of his titles to be he that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, *Rev. 2. 1.*

The priests under the law were to look to the great candlestick in the temple, supply the lamps with oil, and make them clean, *Levit. 24. 3, 4; and 27. 20; and 30. 8.* The church indeed may be eclipsed, but not extinguished; if it be not conspicuous on the mountain, yet it shall be hid in the wilderness. There shall be sprinklings of professors among all people. God will leaven the places where they are into Christianity, and cause them to fructify and grow up in purity and glory: *And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Mich. 5. 7.* It tarries not for man. It attends not the power of man, the precepts of man, or inventions of man; but whose descent is from heaven, and is carried on not by human power, but by the divine Spirit and providence: It shall be firmer than all worldly power, and the strongest kings. *And the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, Isa. 2. 2.* Above mountains and hills, to which sometimes the powers of the world are compared, *Zech. 4. 7.* That providence

which gave the church at first a footing in the world upon a weak foundation to outward appearance, in spite of men and devils will preserve it, and not suffer it to be blown up; he will shadow the church with his wings in a perpetual succession of the choicest mercies.

2. God will in the *greatest exigencies find out means* for the protection of his church. This will be till his providence be at an end. When God hath removed one instrument of his church's protection, he hath his choice of others, whom he can raise and qualify for his work. When those upon whom the church's hopes hang, are taken off, he can raise others that are unlikely, to supply their place. As the lutinist accidentally had a grasshopper leapt upon his instrument, to supply by its noise the place of a string which had newly cracked, whereby his music was continued without interruption. God can spirit men against their own natural fears. It was very improbable that Nicodemus, one of a fearful disposition, who came to our Saviour by night for fear of the Jews, should have the courage to assert his cause in the face of a whole counsel of Pharisees, contriving his death, and at present blunt the edge of their malice, though we read of none at that time in the counsel to second him. The Holy Ghost takes particular notice that it was he that came to Jesus by night.

Joseph of Arimathea, whose name we meet not with in the catalogue of any of the disciples till the time of his death, and then he appears boldly to beg the body of Jesus of Pilate. God will never want instruments for the preserving that church which he owns as his. It is observed by some, that God so ordered it, that the same day that Pelagius, the great poisoner of the Christian doctrine was born in Britain, Austin, the most famous defender of the truth, was born in Africa; that the horn which pushed the truth should no sooner appear, but the carpenter to cut it

off should be provided too. As it is observed where poisons grow, antidotes grow near them by the indulgent provision of the God of nature.

As there is the wisdom of the serpent against the church, so there is the wisdom of God for it. God's goodness upon his church in former ages is not all laid out. He hath his stores still, his wisdom cannot be nonplussed, nor his power weakened; neither is he, nor can he, be weary of his care.

3. The church shall in the end *prove victorious* against all its adversaries, or providence must miss of its aim. The church is compared to an olive tree, in respect of beauty; *his beauty shall be as the olive tree, Hos. 14. 6.* It is so also in respect of victory; olive branches were used in triumph. God is on the church's side, and he is stronger than the strongest, and wiser than the wisest, and higher than the highest. Jesus Christ is the church's head and general. Christ the head watcheth for the good of the church, the body. He must be destroyed before the church can. There is a mighty arm, which though it may for a time seem withered, will in the end be stretched out and get itself the victory. Whilst Christ is in the ship, it may be tossed, but it shall not be sunk. It may be beaten down, but, like a ball, to rebound the higher. The young tree that is shaken by the wind, may lose some leaves, and some fruit too, but the root gets greater strength, and strikes itself deeper into the earth, and makes the branches more capable of a rich return of fruit the following year. The church's stature is compared to a palm tree, which cannot be depressed by the weights which hang upon it, but riseth the higher.

God uses the same method in the church's as in Christ's advancement. Our Saviour's death was necessary to his glory, and the church's affliction sometimes to its exaltation, *Luke 24. 26.* A nation may lose some battles, and yet be victorious. The church may have many a cross, but in the end will surmount

all difficulties. Though judgments and apostacies may be great in a nation, yet God will have a care of his own plants; *There shall be a tenth; it shall return, the holy seed shall be the substance thereof*, Isa. 4. 12, 13. As a tree in winter, which seems dead, but its juice shall revive into rich and generous blossoms. The ark shall float above the waters. Babylon shall fall, the Lamb shall stand upon mount Sion. Men may as well attempt to stop the rising of the sun in its mounting to the meridian, bridle in the tide of the ocean, as hinder the current of an Almighty providence.

4. The *interest of nations* is to bear a respect to the church, and countenance the worship of God in it. This is to concur with God's main end, and imitate him in his providential administrations. God's people, whatever their enemies suggest to the contrary, are a blessing in the midst of a land; their interest is greater than the interest of all the world besides; though they be but a *handful, their fruit shall be like Lebanon*.* The neglect of religion is the ruin of nations. It is observed that Cyrus was slain in the war in Scythia, a little after he neglected the building of the temple of Jerusalem which he had begun. Those Persian kings reigned the longest that favoured the Jews in that and their other just requests. God honoured or disgraced them as they were kind or cruel to his people. And when any act for the good of his people, they shall not be without their reward. When Cyrus should let the Jewish captives go free without ransom, he should be no loser by it. God would give him the labour of Egypt, the merchandize of Ethiopia, and the strength of the Sabeans into his hand for the price of his people's delivery, Isa. 45. 13, 14.

Those nations which should favour them in the times of their persecutions and flights, and give them shelter in their countries, should thrive and prosper by

* Broughton on Dau. 10. 10.

the blessing of God upon them. If Moab give entertainment to the flying Israelites in the time of the invasion of Salmanasser, God will preserve their land that the spoiler shall not enter into the confines of it, and they shall have kings and judges under the protection of the house of David, i. e. under the kings of Israel, as some understand it, *Isa.* 16. 4, 5. Saints are the guardians of the places where they live, their prayers have a greater influence than the wisest counsels, or the mightiest force; *And Elisha cried, my Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,* 2 *Kings* 2. 12. The Chaldee paraphraseth thus: Thou art better to Israel by thy prayers than chariots and horsemen. This is the eulogy of one single prophet, what influence then hath the whole church of God in a place? The whole world is the better for the church of God. The Chaldee paraphrase hath a notion upon *Psal.* 22. 3; *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel;* thou that establishest the world for the praises of Israel. God hath nothing to do in the world but the saving his people: when that is once done, he will put an end to this frame of things. When he hath gathered his wheat into his garner, he will burn up the chaff. His people are the spirit and quintessence of the world. When this is extracted, the rest are flung upon the dunghill as a *caput mortuum*.

5. We may see hence the *ground* of most of the judgments in the world. Men by their rage against the church, will not acknowledge God's government of the world, for the church's good; therefore the psalmist; *Consume them in wrath, consume them that they may not be, and let them know that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth,* *Psal.* 59. 13. The church is the seat of his government, and from thence he extends it to the uttermost parts of the earth. In Jacob he rules, and for the sake of Jacob he orders his government to the ends of the earth: the not acknowledging this, brings wrathful consumptions upon

men: and it is also the end of his judgments, to make men know it.

It is likely enough the four kings might have gone clear away with all their booty, had not they laid their fingers upon Lot: but when they would take him among the rest, they did but solicit their own ruin, and arm the Almighty God against them. God did not think any of the people worth the mention, ver. 11, only Lot a righteous person, ver. 12; he is named as having God's eye only upon him. And when Abraham returns from the victory, ver. 16, the rest of the delivered captives are mentioned in the bulk, Lot only in particular, as though all that had been done, had been done by God only for Lot's sake. They might have preserved the whole prey to themselves, had it not been for this jewel, too precious in God's account for their custody.

And the fearful curse that God pronounced against the Ammonite and Moabite, that they should not come into the congregation for ten generations, though any of them turned proselytes, was because they came not out with so much as bread and water to meet the Israelites, and because they hired Balaam to curse them, *Deut.* 23. 3, 4. The utter wasting of nations and kingdoms, is because they will not serve the interest of God in his people. *For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted, Isa.* 60. 12: God will bring an utter consumption upon those people that refuse to love them, much more upon those that hate them.

6. *What esteem then should there be of the godly in the world?* The providence of God, being chiefly for the good of his people, cannot well fall upon them, but some drops will fall upon those involved with them in a common interest. *When the corn and wine and oil hear Jezreel, and the earth hears the corn, and the heavens hear the earth, and God hears the heavens, Hos.* 2. 21, 22. When their supplications

come up to the great Superintendent of the world, many of the wicked will fare the better for that providence which is given only in answer to Jezreel's prayer : God causes his sun to shine upon the unjust, upon them, not for their sakes.

When Nebuchadnezzar issued that unjust order for the slaying the Chaldeans for not performing an impossible command in telling him the dream he had forgotten, Daniel was sought out to undergo the same fate: yet by his wisdom God bends the heart of Arioch the executioner of this decree to stay his hand. Daniel goes to the king, God stays Nebuchadnezzar's fury, and moves his heart to give them time, *Dan. 2. 12.* The providence is chiefly intended for the preservation of Daniel and his godly companions, but the rest of the wise men have the benefit of it. As the water with which a man waters his choicest plants and flowers in his garden is intended only for them, yet some falling off from those flowers, refresheth the weeds that grow under them. If God had not had such flowers as Daniel and his companions, the weeds in Chaldea had been plucked up.

Yet the ungrateful world takes no notice of the benefits they receive from this salt of the earth, which preserves them, and to whom they are all so much beholden. Lot had been the occasion of restoring Zoar from captivity, as I mentioned before, for the inhabitants of that city were engaged with those of Sodom in the fight against four kings; *And the king of Bela, the same is Zoar, Gen. 14. 8:* and perhaps were carried captives with the rest of their neighbours: and it had been saved from the flames which fell upon Sodom merely by Lot's prayer: *See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing, that I will not overthrow this city for the which thou hast spoken, Gen. 19. 21:* yet he found them a surly people, and was requited with a rude reception notwithstanding his kindness. *He went up out of Zoar, for he feared to dwell in Zoar, ver. 13.* It was not likely he was

so distrustful of God, that he should overthrow it, when he had absolutely promised him the contrary: therefore most likely for some churlish threatenings from them. Nay, Sodom itself was beholden to him for a small respite of the judgment intended against them. For God tells him he could do nothing till he were come thither, *Gen.* 19. And it was so, for Lot was entered into Zoar before a drop of brimstone and fire was rained down upon Sodom, ver. 23, 24. *Then the Lord rained upon Sodom; when? when Lot was entered into Zoar.*

This good the wicked world gets by God's people, is so evident, that sometimes wicked men cannot but take notice of it. Laban, a selfish idolater, was sensible of it. *I have found by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me, for thy sake, Gen.* 30. 27. It was a lesson so legible, that he might have learned it sooner than in fourteen years. The church is the chief object of preservation, wicked men are preserved for their sakes; as dung is preserved, not for its own sake, but for the manuring a fruitful field, and thorns in the hedge are preserved for the garden's sake.

7. It is then *a very foolish thing* for any to contend against the *welfare* of God's people. It is to strive against an almighty and unwearied providence. Men may indeed sometimes be suffered by God for holy ends to have their wills, in some measure, upon the church, but not altogether: they must first depose him from his throne, blind his eyes, or hold his arm. It is as foolish as if a worm should design to dig down a mountain, or chaff to marshal itself in battle-array against the wind, or for a poor fly to stop the motion of a millstone.

It is foolish, in the first place, because it is *exceeding sinful*. What is done against the church is rather done against God than against it. Since all her constitution, worship, observances, are directed to God as their ultimate end; so that to endeavour to destroy

the church, is to deny God his worship, deprive him of his sanctuary, break open his house, rob him of his jewels, and will be so interpreted by God at the last day. If the church be God's house, the enemies shall answer for every invasion, every forcible entry, for the breaking down the gates and bars of it; God will sue them at last for dilapidations.

It is foolish to contend against the church, because it must be *unsuccessful*. Shall God be afraid of the multitudes and power of men? *No more than a lion, or a young lion roaring after his prey, when a multitude of shepherds are called forth against them, shall he be afraid of their voice, or abase himself for their noise, Isa. 31. 4.* Noise and clamour is all they can do, and that not long. The fierceness of the lion quickly scatters them. The associations, and men's girding themselves against the church, is but a preparation to their own ruin; *Associate yourselves together, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces, Isa. 8. 9,* is three times repeated. Your counsels, saith he, shall not stand against that presence of God that is with us, *for God is with us.*

To contend against the church is very *destructive* too. God will not always be still and refrain himself; he seems to do so for a while; but when he does arise, he will destroy and devour at once, *Isa. 42. 14.* When God is angry with his people, and gives them into the hands of men to execute his justice upon them, and punish them, he will even punish those enemies for their cruelty, and going beyond their commission, in satisfying their own immoderate passions upon them. Upon this account God threatens Babylon; *I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thy hand, thou didst shew them no mercy, Isa. 47. 6;* whereupon God threatens them afterwards, &c. so God was *sore displeased with the heathen, for when he was but a little displeased with his people, they helped forward the affliction, Zech. 1. 15.*

PART X.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF PROVIDENCE.

Providence the believer's comfort in duty—In poverty—When judgments are inflicted upon others—In the greatest extremities—Jehovah's dealings with his church—Glorify his power—His wisdom—Compassion—Righteousness—The extremities and deliverances of the church most advantageous—Advantages enumerated.

II. **T**HE doctrine of providence is a source of *comfort*.

If all the providences of God be for the good of the church; if *his eyes run to and fro to shew himself strong for them*, it affords matter of great comfort. His providence is continual for them, he hath *seven pipes* to convey kindness to them, as well as *seven lamps*, whereby to discern their straits, *Zech. 4. 2.* His providence is as vast as his omniscience. The number of pipes belonging to the candlestick of the church is exact according to the number of lamps. The church's misery cannot be hid from God's eye, let it be in what part of the earth soever, for his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, and his sight excites his strength. Upon the sight of their distressed condition, he watches only for the fittest oppor-

tunity to shew himself strong for them. - And when that opportunity comes, he is speedy in the deliverance of them; *He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind,* *Psal.* 18. 10. He does not only ride upon a cherub, but fly. His wings are nothing but wind, which hath the quickest and strongest motion, which moves the greatest bodies, and turns down all before it. What is for the good of the whole, has an influence upon every member of the body.

1. The providence of God is our comfort in *duties and special services*. Nothing shall be wanting for encouragement to duty, and success in it, when God calls any to it, since all his providence is for the good of the church. Let there be but sincerity on our parts, in our attempts of service upon God's call, and we need not fear a want of providence upon God's part. God never calls any to serve his church in any station, but he both spirits and encourages them in that service. God has in his common providence suited the nature of every creature to that place in which he has set it in the world; and will he not much more in his special providence suit every one to that place he calls them to, for the service of his church? He did not forsake Christ in redeeming his church, neither will he forsake any in assisting his church. When Joseph of Arimathea would boldly demand the body of our Saviour, providence made the way plain before him, he meets with no check, neither from Pilate nor the priests.

2. Divine providence is the comfort of the church in *meanness and lowness*. It is one and the same God that rules the affairs of the whole world, of the church, and of every particular member of it. As it is the same soul that informs the whole body, the meanest member as well as that which is most excellent. Not the meanest sincere christian but is under God's eye for good. The Spirit acts and animates every member in the church, the weakest as well as the most

towering christian. Baruch was but the prophet Jeremiah's amanuensis or scribe, and servant to Jeremiah, who was no great man in the world himself, yet God takes such notice of his service, that he would particularly provide for him, and commands Jeremiah in a way of prophecy to tell him as much; *I will bring evil upon all flesh, but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey, whithersoever thou goest, Jer. 45. 5.*

3. Providence is the comfort of the church in the greatest *judgments* inflicted upon others. In an epidemical judgment upon the whole nation of the Jews. God would have a special care of Baruch. If he should *cast his people far off among the heathen, and scatter them among the countries*, yet even there he would *be a little sanctuary unto them*. His own presence should supply the want of a temple, so he is pleased to express himself, *Ezek. 11. 16*. But how is it possible the great God can be but a little sanctuary? His eye is upon them to see their danger, and his hand upon them to secure them from it. His promise shall shield them, and his wings shall cover them. While he hath indignation, he hath a secret chamber for their security. An almighty shadow, under which they may abide. *Isa. 26. 20. Psa. 91. 1, 4*. In times of the most devouring danger, he hath a seal to set upon their foreheads as a mark of his special protection. We never have so much experience of God's care and strength, as in times of trouble; *He is their strength in time of trouble, Psa. 37. 39*. He is a friend who is as able as willing, and as willing as able to help them, whose watchfulness over them is as much above their apprehension as it is above their merits.

4. In the *greatest extremities* wherein his people may be, there are promises of comfort. Both in overflowing waters, and scorching fires, he will be with them, *Isa. 43. 2*. His providence shall attend his promise, and his truth shall be their shield and buckler,

Psal. 91. 4. That surely is a sufficient support; Christ thought it so when he only said to his disciples, *It is I, be not afraid, John* 6. 17, 18. What though there be a storm, a darkness and trouble, *It is I*, the Saviour says, *I am he*. The darkness of the night troubles not the pilot whilst he hath his compass to steer by. If all his providences be for the good of them that fear him, he can never want means to bring them out of trouble, because he is always actually exercised in governing that which is for their good; and till he sees it fit to deliver them, he will be with them. Great mercies succeed the sharpest afflictions, *Jer.* 30. 5, 6, 7, &c. When there should be a voice of trembling, and men with their hands upon their loins as women in travail, and paleness in their faces, from the excess of their fears: in that day God would break the yoke from them, and they should serve the Lord their God, and David their king. Though the night be never so dark, yet it is certain the sun will rise and disperse its light next morning, and one time or other shew itself in its brightness. We have no reason to despond in great extremities, since he can think us into safety; *Lord, think on me, Psal.* 40. 17; much more look us into it; his thoughts and his eyes move together.

5. In *fear of wants*, providence is our comfort. The power of the Governor of the world cannot be doubted. His love, as little as it seems, since it hath moved him to prepare heaven to entertain his people at the end of their journey, will not be wanting to provide accommodation for them upon the way, since all things both good and bad are at his beck, and under the government of his gracious wisdom. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, not only to defend them in dangers, but supply them in want; for his strength is shewed both ways. Doth he providentially regard them that have no respect for him, and will he not employ his his power for, and extend his care to, them that adore and love him, and keep up his honour in the world?

He will not surely be regardless of the afflictions of his creatures.

His people are not only his creatures, but his new creatures, their bodies are not only created by him, but redeemed by his Son. The purchase of the Redeemer is joined to the providence of the Creator. If he took care of you when he might have damned you for your sins, will he not much more since you are believers in Christ? And he cannot damn you believing, unless he renounce his Son's mediation and his own promise. A natural man provides for his own, much more a righteous man; *A good man leaves his inheritance to his children, Prov. 19. 22*, much more the God of righteousness, a God who hath his eye always upon them. His eye will affect his heart, and his heart spirit the hand of his power to relieve. He hath *prepared of his goodness for the poor, Psal. 68. 10.*

6. The providence of God is a source of comfort in the *low estate of the church at any time.* God's eye is upon his church, even whilst he seems to have forsaken them. If he seem to be departed, it is but in some other part of the earth, to shew himself strong for them; wherever his eye is fixed in any part of the world, his church hath his heart, and his church's relief is his end. Though the church may sometimes lie as *among the pots*, in a degraded condition, yet there is a time of resurrection, when God will restore it to its true glory, and make it as white as a *dove* with its *silver* wings. The sun is not always obscured by a thick cloud, but will be freed from the darkness of it. *God will judge his people, and repent himself concerning his servants, Psal. 135. 14.** It is a comfort to God to deliver his people, and he will do it in such a season when it shall be most comfortable to his glory and their hearts.

The very name Jerusalem, some derive from *Jireh Salem, God will provide in Salem.* The new

* יתנה' Comfort himself.

Jerusalem is the title given to God's church, *Rev. 1*, and is still the object of his providence, and he will provide for it; *Jehovah Jireh, Gen. 22. 14*. God will raise up the honour and beauty of his church; great men shall be servants to it, and employ their strength for it when God shall have mercy on it: yea, the learning and knowledge of the world shall contribute to the building of it. *The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary. It shall be called the city of the Lord, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel, that she may know that the Lord is her Saviour, and her Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob,* see *Isa. 60. 10, 13*. As Christ rose in his natural, so he will in his spiritual body. If Christ when dead could not be kept from rising, Christ now living shall not be hindered from raising and helping his church.

His own glory is linked with his people's security; and though he may not be moved for any thing in them because of their sinfulness, he will for his own name, because of its excellency; *I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, Ezek. 36. 22*: As sorrows increased upon the Israelites, the nearer their deliverance approached. And because this method of God is the greatest mystery even to good men, let us consider this a little; that God does leave his church to extremities before he doth deliver it, and why he does so.

Take the resolution of this in some propositions.

First. It is indeed *God's usual method* to leave the church to extremity before he commands help. You never heard of any eminent deliverance of the church but was ushered in by some amazing distress. The Israelites were not saved till they were put in between sea, hills, and forts, that their destruction was inevitable unless heaven relieved them. Pharaoh resolves to have his will, and God resolves to have his; but he lets him come with his whole force and open

mouth at the Israelites' backs, and then makes the waters his sepulchre. Constantine, the man-child in the Revelation, was preceded by Dioclesian the sharpest persecutor. When his people are at a loss, it is his usual time to do his greatest works for them; God had promised Christ many ages, and yet there was no appearance of him; there was still promise after promise, and no performance, *Psal.* 40. 8. It was then, *Lo, I come*, yet many hundred years rolled away, and no sight of him yet. There was captivity and affliction, and no Redeemer; but when the world was overrun with idolatry, the Jews oppressed by the Romans, the sceptre departed from Judah, Herod an Edomite and stranger king, and scarce any faith left, then, then he comes.

The world will be in much the like case at his next coming; *When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith in the earth*, *Luke* 18. 8; there shall be faintings, despondency, unbelief of his promise, as though he had cast off all care of his church's concerns. Faith in this plea does not mean justifying faith, but a faith in that particular promise of his coming. The faith of the Israelites must needs begin to flag, when they saw their males murdered by the Egyptians; could they believe the propagation of the seed of Abraham, when murder took off the infants, and labour and age would in time the old ones? Whilst their children were preserved, the promise might easily be believed. But consider, this was but just before their deliverance; like a violent crisis before recovery. He then *judges his people, and repents himself for his servants, when he sees their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left*, *Deut.* 32. 36.

He does so for the wicked many times. When the affliction of idolatrous Israel was bitter, when there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel, then he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash, *2 Kings* 14. 26, 27. He does so with private persons; Peter might have been delivered by

God's power out of prison, when he was first sent thither, but God thought it fittest for him to lie in chains, and free him but the night before his intended execution, *Acts* 12. 6, 7. Lot had his goods rifled, and carried away captive, before God stirred up Abraham to rescue him. When the hand of the wicked lies heaviest upon the heads of the righteous, and wrings the most mournful sighs from them; when they are needy, and the wicked securely puffing at them, as though they had brought them to so low a condition as to blow them away with a blast, now saith God will I arise; *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him at safety from him that puffeth at him, Psal.* 12. 5. Now; this is the time I watched for, as fittest for my own glory and their safety. Then God disappoints them, when they seem to have got to the goal with the ball at their foot.

Secondly. God hereby *glorifies himself*. He then discovers that there is nothing too high for his power to check, nothing too subtle for his wisdom to disappoint, nothing too low for his love to embrace. That is the season wherein his mercy will be most prized, his power most admired, his wisdom most adored, and his justice most cleared. God lets the concerns of his church go backward, that he may bring them on with more glory to himself, and satisfaction to his creature. God will divide the benefit and the honour between himself and the creature; he will have the whole glory, and his creature shall have the sensible advantage. They shall enjoy salvation, there is their benefit; but not by sword or bow, but *by the Lord their God, Hos.* 1. 7. Saved they should be, but in such a way wherein the honour of God might most appear without any mixture of the creature.

God glorifies his *power*. His eyes run to and fro to shew himself strong. He will then pitch upon such a season, when his strength may appear most

illustrious, and none else have any pretence to claim an equal strength with him. A time of extremity is the fittest opportunity for this. When his power cannot be clouded by any interposition of the creature for challenging a share in it. The greater the malice against the church, the weaker the church's ability to help itself, the more glorious is the power of God magnified in deliverance; little dangers are not so suitable for the triumph of an infinite strength. As God let Christ lie three days in the grave, that his resurrection might be known to be the fruit of a divine power; for the same end he lets his mystical body lie in the same condition. Had God brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of the kings that were friends to them from a kindly remembrance of Joseph, there had been no character of a divine power, though there had been of a divine truth apparent in the case; but he set apart that time for their deliverance, when he was to contest with the mightiest opposition from the whole body of the Egyptian nation, who had forgot Joseph their great benefactor. Had not the disciples been in a great storm, ready to be cast away, and Christ asleep, till they were in extremity, they had not seen such visible marks of the extensiveness of their Master's power. *Matt. 8. 23.*

When the hearts of the strong men fainted, when the Assyrians would not hear the ambassadors of peace; when they had broke their former covenant, resolved to invade the land; when their calamity and despair had arrested all their hopes, now, when all things are in such a deplorable state, *will I rise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.* God was not asleep or unconcerned, but he sat still watching for such a season; *now*, is three times repeated. The psalmist gives us a record of this in his particular case. When the waters of his affliction were many, the enemy strong, and too strong for him, their strength edged with an intense hatred, then God appears to be his stay, and prevents them

in the day of his calamity, *Psa.* 18. 16, 17, 18. God lets his enemies be too strong for him, that he might appear his only stay, without any mixture of David's strength in the case. When the Jews thrust Christ out of Nazareth, led him to the brow of the hill, and were ready to cast him down, then, and not till then, he frees himself out of their hands, and disappoints the effects of their rage. As Christ dealt thus for himself, so he deals for his church in all ages.

God glorifies his *wisdom*. *His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth to shew himself strong*; it is not a bare strength that God would shew, or such a power which we call in man a brutish valour, without wit or skill; but to shew his strength with his wisdom, when all his other attributes may be glorified with that of his power. When all worldly helps are departed, we can as little ascribe our security to our own wisdom and industry, as to our own strength and power. The physician's skill is best evidenced in mastering a desperate disease. He will bring the *counsels of the heathen to nought*, *Psa.* 33. 10. He will let them counsel, he will let them devise and carry on their counsels near to execution, that he may shew, that as the strength of hell is no match for his power, so the craft of Satan is no mate for his wisdom. But he raises the trophies of his wisdom upon the subtle devices of his enemies.

God glorifies his *care and compassion*. When his people are nearest crushing, God is nearest preserving. God's mercy is greatest when his saints' misery is deepest; when Sion is as an outcast, it shall be taken into God's protection; *I will heal thee of thy wounds, because they called thee an outcast, saying, this is Sion whom no man seeks after*, *Jer.* 30. 16, 17. When none stood up to plead for her, when her lovers she depended on, had forgotten and forsaken her, when they thought her cast out of the care of any creature, the Creator would take her up. When the ruin was inevitable as to man, their preservation was most re-

garded by God. Had God stopped Pharaoh at his first march, by raising some mutiny in his army, his mercy to his people, as well as his power against his enemies, had not been so conspicuous. The more desperate things are, the fitter subject for the advancement of God's kindness. Had God conducted the Israelites through a rich and fruitful country, it would have obscured the glory of his care of them, which was more signal in directing them through a barren desert, crowded with fiery serpents, without bread to nourish them, or water to refresh them, wherein he manifested himself to be both their caterer and physician.

Moses was never more peculiarly under God's protection, no not when he had the whole guard of Israel about him in the wilderness, than when his mother had exposed him to the river forlorn, in a pitched ark, and forsaken by his sister, who stood aloof to see how providence would conduct him. When Laban was possessed with fury against Jacob, God countermands it, and issues out his own order to him, how he should behave himself towards his son. *Gen. 31. 24, 29.* God times his kindness, so that it may appear to be nothing else but grace; that his people may be able to understand the very particularities of it; *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, Isa. 30. 18:* he leaves them therefore for a while to the will of their enemies; *At the rebuke of five shall you flee, till you be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign upon a hill, ver. 17.*

Never is salvation sweeter, and mercy better relished than when it snatcheth us out of the teeth of danger. God would have his mercy valued, and it is fit it should. And when is a calm more grateful than after the bitterest storm, attended with the highest despair? God's mercy in sparing Isaac after the knife was at his throat, was more welcome and more delicious both to father and son, than if God had re-

vealed his intent to Abraham in three days' journey to the mount Moriah. But God suspending his soul in bitterness all that time, prepared his heart for the valuation of that mercy. When human help forsakes us, God most embraces us; *When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up, Psa. 27. 10.*

God glorifies his *righteousness and justice.* There is a measure of wickedness God stays for, which will be an object of his justice without exception. When the measure of a people's covetousness is come, then their end is come, and God will fill them with men as with caterpillars, and they shall lift up a shout against them, *Jer. 51. 13, 14.* Hereby God clears the justice of his proceedings, that he exercised patience so long; that things were come to that pass, that either his people or his enemies must be destroyed. As the case was with the Israelites, had not God marvellously appeared, every man of them had been cut off or reduced to slavery. The die was cast, either the Egyptians or Israelites must be defeated: either God must appear for his church, or none would be left in the world to profess him. In such a case the justice of God is more unexceptionable. No man has any semblance for complaining of him; for he struck not till the safety of his adversaries was inconsistent with his own honour and interest of the world.

When men come to such a height, as to slight and resolve to break the laws of God, then is the time for the honour of his righteousness in his own institutions, to vex them in his sore displeasure; *Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them, &c. When? Psa. 2. 3, 5.* When they resolve to *cast away his bands and cords from them,* ver. 2. He is forced to rise, then, when men make void his law, and tread down the honour of it; when they would not have a standing law in the world, or a people to profess him; *It is time for the Lord to work, for they have*

made void thy law, Psa. 119. 126. When the grapes of wickedness are thus fully ripe, then is God's time for the honour of his justice to cast them into the wine-press of his wrath. *Rev. 14. 19, 20.* This is God's set time when he may glorify, without any exception, his justice in punishing his enemies' sins, his wisdom in defeating his enemies' plots, his power in destroying his enemies' strength, and his mercy in relieving his people's wants.

Thirdly, Such extremities, and deliverance in them, are *most advantageous for his people.*

1. It being a season to *improve and know their interest.* Men do not usually seek to God, or at least so earnestly, as when they are in distress; the time of the tempest was the time of the disciples' praying to Christ; the Israelites, you seldom find calling upon God but in times of danger and distress; hereby God encourages and gives an argument for prayer. The psalmist uses the extremity of the church often as an argument to move God to pity; *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt, Psa. 123. 3.* We are glutted with contempt, as low as low can be; *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord, arise, cast us not off for ever, our soul is bowed to the dust, Psa. 44. 23, 24.* That is the most successful time for prayer which is the time of the stirring of God's affections. He hath been a *strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, Isa. 25. 1.* They in such a time find how considerable their interest is with God, when upon their prayer they shall find relief suitable to every kind of danger. The spirit of prayer upon the church is but the presage of their adversaries' ruin.

When God seeks to destroy the nations that come against Jerusalem, he will pour upon the inhabitants of it, a spirit of grace and of supplication; *And in*

that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem, and I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication, Zech. 12. 9. This time of extremity, when all their hands fail, should enliven the church's prayers. Our great Intercessor seems in this case to set us a pattern. *O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem? Zech. 1. 12, חתם* single by itself, not in an affix. When all the earth sits still and is at rest, unconcerned in the affairs of thy church, if thou wilt not have mercy on them in this strait, who shall relieve them? none else have any mind to it; then issue out comfortable words to the angel from the mouth of God. This is an advantage of extremity, it sets Christ a pleading, and the church on praying.

2. As a season for *acting faith* at present, and an *encouragement of reliance* upon him in *future straits*. As a season for acting faith at present. Our Saviour lets Lazarus die and stink in the grave, before he raised him, that he might both confirm faith in his disciples' hearts, and settle it in the hearts of some of the Jews. *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe, John 11. 15, 45.* What, let Lazarus die, one that he loved, one so strongly pleaded for by two sisters that he loved too, and solicited upon his friendship to relieve him? *Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick, ver. 3;* and our Saviour glad he was not there to prevent it? yes, not glad of Lazarus's extremity, nor of the church's; but of the opportunity to give them greater ground of faith and encouragement to trust him. The church's faith is God's glory: he that hath many things to trust to, is in suspense which he should take hold of; but when there is but one left, with what greediness will he clasp about that! God cuts down worldly props, that we might make him our stay.

How will the church in extremity recollect all the

deliverances of it in former ages, and put them up in pleas to God, for a renewal of his wonted kindness, and new successions of deliverance, whereby God gets the glory of his former work, and his church the present comfort in renewing fiducial acts upon him? How does Jehoshaphat put God in mind of his gracious assistance acted some ages before, when he was in a strait, by the invasion of a powerful army. *Art not thou our God that didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel? 2 Chron. 20. 7. We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee, ver. 12:* Never are the church's eyes so fixed upon God; never God's eyes so fixed upon the church, as in times of their distress. Then there is a sweet communion with, and recounting of all their former friendships: the church then throws itself wholly upon God: its prosperity is but like a troubled sea, its distress is the time of its rest. So Asa, when assaulted by a million of men under Zerah the Ethiopian, throws himself and the whole weight of his concerns upon the hands of God, and makes his cause God's? *Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee, 2 Chron. 14. 11.*

And there is an encouragement also in the deliverance for future faith. It gives a ground for future faith from the riches of the present experience; in such distresses there is the highest experience of God, and hope is the fruit of experience; how apt are we to believe God in other straits, when we have had assistance, like they that dreamed, come unexpectedly upon us. God overthrew Pharaoh's host in the Red sea, when they were upon the heels of the affrighted Israelites and ready to crush them, but God gave them *to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness, Psal. 74. 14,* as a standing excellent dish to feed their hopes for all future deliverances upon their trust in God. And indeed that deliverance was an earnest of their perpetual security, by special providence in

any succeeding trouble. And God often gives them a particular charge to remember that deliverance, with a practical remembrance, to still their fear, and support their faith. *Thou shalt not be afraid of them, but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and to all the Egyptians, Deut. 7. 18.* He would have them remember it as a covenant-mercy, *what the Lord thy God did*, thy God in covenant, not what the Lord did barely by an arm of power, but what he did by a vastness of affection, and as a God of truth and firmness in his covenant.

3. In *fitting* them by the extremity *for a holy reception of the mercy intended.* God keeps up the distress of his church to expel self-confidence. Trust in earthly things are the great checks of God's kindness. We hardly forsake this temper till we are forsaken by all those things we confide in. Times of extremity make us more humble; and humility, like the plow, fits us for the seed of mercy. The garden-er's digging up the clods is but to prepare the earth for the receiving and nourishing some excellent plants he intends to plant. There is a certain set time for God's great actions. He lets the powers of darkness have their hour, and God will take his hour. *Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Sion, for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come, Psal. 102. 13.* He hath a set time for the discovery of his mercy, and he will not stay a jot beyond it. What is this time? When they *eat ashes like bread, and mingle their drink with weeping*, ver. 9, &c. When they are most humble, and when the servants of God have more affection to the church. When their humble, and ardent affections are strong, even to the ruin and rubbish of it; when they have a mighty desire and longing for the reparation of it, as the Jews in captivity had for the very dust of the temple. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof*, ver. 14. For, there notes it to be a reason why the set time was judged by them to be come.

That is God's set time when the church is most believing, most humble, most affectionate to God's interest in it, and most sincere. Without faith we are not fit to desire mercy; without humility we are not fit to receive it, without affection we are not fit to value it, without sincerity we are not fit to improve it. Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exercise of those qualifications.

4. In *securing them against future straits*. For God's disappointing enemies when they think themselves sure of all, is the highest discouragement to them, and those of the like temper, to renew the like attempts; but if they do, it is an evidence they shall meet with the like success; it is the highest vexation to see their projects diverted, when they have lighted their match, and are ready to fire. Men may better take notice how God loves his people when he apprehends their adversaries in the very pinnacle of their pride, and flings them down from the mount of their hopes. It does not only dash the present designs, but dishearten future attempts. The Egyptians after their overthrow at the Red sea, never attempted to disturb them in their journey in the wilderness. It was a bridle to all their enemies, except Amalek, upon whose country they travelled in the wilderness, when it was the interest of state in all those nations to rout that swarm of people that must have some seat to dwell in; and every nation might justly fear to be dispossessed by them; yet we read of no league among those nations bordering upon the wilderness, such a terror did God strike into them by that relief he gave his people in their extremity at the Red sea; whereby he provided for their future security in their whole journey. It was this melted the hearts of the Gibeonites, one of the nations of Canaan, and brought them to a submission to Joshua, as the sentiment of all their neighbours. *We are come because of the name of the Lord thy God, for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, Josh. 9. 9.*

And for this and other reasons it may be, that the times before the church's last deliverance shall be sharper than any before ; which our Saviour intimates, *For then there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no nor ever shall be, Mat. 24. 21.* In discoursing with his disciples of the troubles at the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type of the trouble preceding the end of the world, he adds a discourse of what shall be at the end of the world, in the last attempt of the enemies of the church ; for ver. 29, he saith, *immediately after the tribulation of those days,* he speaks of his coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. And also in the Revelations, *And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. Rev. 16. 18.* This perhaps at the pouring out of the seventh vial, may concern the christian church as well as the antichristian party. But the reason why it may be sharper just before that last deliverance, than it was in former ages, may be because it is the last effort the enemy shall make ; the last demonstration of God's power and wisdom for, and care of his church, and of justice upon his enemies in such cases. The last season for their multiplying their cries, and acting their faith for such a concern.

PART XI.

OBLIGATIONS INFERRED FROM THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.

We should not fear the enemies of the church—Providence not to be censured—Considerations to induce a contrary spirit—How we should interpret the dispensations of God—Former dispensations to be considered—The advantages of this—The necessity of faith in the providence of God—Waiting upon God in the way of his providence—The duty of prayer for the church—The affection of Jehovah for the church to be imitated—Importance of sincerity.

III. **WE** now proceed further to improve the subject by way of *exhortation*.

If it be so, that the providence of God is chiefly designed for the good of the church ;

First, Fear not the enemies of the church. It is a wrong to God. Fear of man is always attended with a forgetfulness of God ; I, even I am he that comforteth you, who art thou that art afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens, &c. Isa. 51. 12, 13. It is to value the power of grass above the power of the Creator, as though that had more ability

to hurt, than God to help. As if men were as strong as mountains, and God as weak as a bulrush. It is a wrong to his truth; hath he not comforted you in his promise? What creature should then deject you? It is a wrong to his mercy; is he not the Lord thy Maker? Calvin refers this to regeneration, and not creation. Hath he not renewed you by his Spirit? and will he not protect you by his strength? And that you may not question his power, look up to the heavens which he hath stretched out, and the foundations of the earth which he hath laid; and is that arm which hath done such mighty works, too weak to defend that work which is choicer in his eye than either the extended heaven, or the established earth? We vilify God, and defile his glory, when our fear of man's power stifles our faith in God, *Neither fear you their fear, nor be afraid, sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, Isa. 8. 12. 13.* Let the wicked fear the Assyrians, and engage in confederacies against them; but let your eyes be lifted up to me and my providence. God will either turn away the mouth of the cannon from the church, or arm it against the shot. Either preserve it from a danger, protect it in it, or sanctify it to the church, and who need fear a sword in a father's hand.

Will you fear man, who have a *God to secure you?* The church belongs to God, not to man, as a just propriety. *Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by my name; thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, &c. Isa. 43. 1. Thou art mine, not man's.* Thou art mine, I am thine. I will be with thee as thine, I will secure thee as mine. Is my creating, is my forming, is my redeeming thee to no purpose? I will not secure you from trouble; but surely my redemption of you, the propriety I have in you, should secure you from fears in those troubles. None shall hurt you whilst I have power to defend you. *God with us,* if well con-

sidered and believed, is sufficient to still those fears which have the greatest outward objects for their encouragement; *The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid, Psal. 27. 1.* If God be our strength to support us, why should the weakness of dust and ashes scare us? Alliance to great men, and protection of princes, prop up men's hearts against the fears of others; and shall alliance to God be of a weaker efficacy?

A heathen* could so argue, that knew nothing of redemption. Let the counsels of enemies be crafty, *yet they consult against God's hidden ones*, hidden by God whilst plotted against by men; who would fear the stratagems of men, whilst protected in an impregnable tower? God hides, when men are ready to seize the prey. How did the angel protect a sincere trembling Lot against the invasion of a whole city, and secured his person, whilst he blinded his enemies' eyes that they could not find the door. Instruments cannot design more maliciously, than Christ watches over them affectionately. Christ hath his eye to see your works and danger where Satan hath his throne.

Will you fear men, who have a *God to watch over their motions?* What counsels can prevail where God intends to overrule their resolves? There is no place so close as to keep private resolutions from his knowledge. This was the thought of those statesmen against whom the prophet Isaiah thunders; *Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay, Isa. 29. 15, 16.* Their counsels were as well known to him as the potter's clay is to the potter, which he can either frame into a vessel, or fling away into the mass from whence he took it. God has not despoiled himself of his government; nor

* Arram. in Epist. lib. 1. c. 9.

will devolve his right upon any men to dispose of his concerns. When men think to act secretly, as though they framed themselves, as though God's eye were not upon them; he will watch and trace all their motions, and make them insignificant to their purposes. Satan himself, the slyest and subtlest agent, is too open to God to hide his counsels from him. Never fear man till the whole combined policies of hell can controul the resolves of heaven; till God wants omniscience to dive into their secrets, skill to defeat their counsels, and an arm to abate their power.

Will you fear men or devils who have *a God to restrain them*. The great dragon and general of the serpent's seed is under a binding power, who can bind him not only a thousand years, but a thousand ages. Have his seed more force to resist almightiness, than their captain? The prophet speaking of the Assyrian's threatening Jerusalem, and the confusion in some cities for fear of them, yet, saith he, he shall remain at Nob, a city of the Levites, not far from Jerusalem; where he might have a full prospect of the city. He shall but shake his hand, he shall not gripe it in his talons; he shall shew his teeth, but not bite; snarl, but not worry, *Isa. 10. 32.* God will let out so much of the enemies' wrath, as may answer his gracious ends to the church in purifying them, but the remainder of wrath, which remains in their hearts for the church's destruction, *he will restrain*. As a physician weighs out so much as may curb the disease, not kill the patient.

The chain of providence controuls the power of Satan, when it does not change his desires. The Egyptian's will against the Israelites was strong, but his power was weak. Might and power is only in the hand of God, who reigns over all, *1 Chron. 29. 12.* And God will exert so much of power to bridle the inclinations of nature in the wicked for the good of his people. He will give them so much line as may serve his holy purposes, but not so much as shall prejudice the church's standing. A staff is not capable of

giving a smart blow without the force of the hand that holds it. Wicked men are no more than a staff in God's hand; *The rod of my anger, the staff in their hand is my indignation, Psal. 10. 5*; he can either strike with it, or break it in pieces. The staff is still in the hand of God, and can do no more than what his merciful arm moves it to; as he can restrain it, so he can divert it.

What! should we fear those whose hearts are in God's hands, whose enmity is under God's restraint, who can change their fury into favour, or at least bridle it as he does the waves of the sea? No enemies' shot can exceed God's commission. God often laughs when men plot, and disappoints when they begin to act. Sometimes he makes them act contrary to their intentions. Balaam comes to curse the people, and God turns his tongue to bless them, which, if guided by his own heart, would have poured out execrations upon them, *Numb. 23. 7, 8*. God puts the word into his mouth, but not in his heart, *ver. 5*, and makes him bless that which his heart hates.

4. Will you fear them who have a *God to ruin them?* Though the beast in the Revelations hath seven heads, a reaching wisdom; and ten horns, a mighty power, both the numbers of seven and ten, being numbers of perfection in scripture, yet with all his wisdom and strength he shall fall down to destruction; they can no more resist God's power, than blustering winds or raging waves can cross his will. When the enemies of the church are in combination, like thorns full of prickles *folded together*, then shall they *be consumed like stubble that is dry, Nahum 1. 10*. God loves to defeat pride; *In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them, Exod. 18. 11*. God waits but the time of their swelling to make them burst. Absalom kills his brother, withdraws the people from their obedience to the king, stirs them up to revolt, enters Jerusalem in his father's absence, pollutes his concubines, engages in designs

against his life, raiseth an army against him, who would not say David was in extremity, and Absalom alone prospering in his designs? But when Absalom comes to open force, God arises, an oak catches him, his mule forsakes him, and Joab dispatches him. Senacherib had prospered in his conquest of Judea, taken many strong towns, laid siege to Jerusalem, solicits the people to revolt, blasphemeth the God of heaven, and then an angel comes and makes a dreadful slaughter in a night, and he returning to his own country is killed by his own sons. *2 Kings* 19. 7, 35, 36, 37. God's arrows shall never miss their mark, and he hath more than one to strike into the hearts of his enemies; *He sent out his arrows and scattered them, Psa.* 18. 14. What reason then to fear even multitudes, who can never be too strong for that God who gave them that little strength they have!

Secondly, The second duty to which we are exhorted. If all God's providences tend to the good of his church and people. Then *censure not God* in his dark providences. As we are often too hasty in our desires for mercy, and are not content to stay God's time; so we are too hasty in making constructions of providence, and will not stay God's leisure of informing us. When God seems at the beginning of every providence to speak the same language as Christ did to Peter in washing his feet; *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter, John* 13. 7. The instruments are visible, the action sensible, but the inward meaning still lies obscured from our view. We are too short-sighted to apprehend and judge of God's works: man cannot understand his own way; much less the ways of an infinite God. God's *judgments are a great deep*, we may sooner fathom the deepest part in the sea, understand all the turnings of those subterranean passages, lave out the ocean with a spoon, or suck in that great mass of waters, than understand the ways of God with our shallow minds. He makes darkness his pavilion;

he is sometimes very obscure in his ways. Neither the greatness of his means, nor the wisdom of his workings, can be fully apprehended by men. We have sense to feel the effects, but not heads to understand the reasons and methods of the divine government; *No man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, Eccles. 3. 11.* Though a man may see the beginning of God's work, yet is he able to walk comprehending the divine wisdom in every step it takes? Will he not lose the track often before it comes to an end? It is not the face, but the back parts of providence which we behold; why then should we usurp an authority beyond our ability, and make ourselves God's judges; as if infinite wisdom and power were bounded within the narrow compass of our purblind reason? His ways are beyond our tracing, and his counsels too high for our short measures. Since therefore God satisfies the righteousness of his own will, let us submit our curiosity to his wisdom, and forbear our censures of that exact righteousness and superlative wisdom which we cannot comprehend.

Therefore, first fix this in your minds, *that God is righteous, wise, and good in every thing.* Good, therefore nothing can be hurtful to his people; *righteous*, therefore nothing unjust; *wise*, therefore nothing in vain: our injurious thoughts of him make us so uncharitable towards him, and greater censurers of his righteous ways, than we are of men's wicked actions. *Clouds and darkness are about him:* our eye cannot pierce through his darkness, or see the frame of his counsels, yet let these principles be kept as the centre, *that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, Psa. 9. 2.* He is righteous and wise in his darkness, though his judgments are unsearchable to us, and his ways past finding out by our most industrious inquisitions; and a depth of knowledge and wisdom there is in them, too deep for us to measure. *Rom. 9. 33.* God was always righteous, wise, and

good, he is the same still; though the motions of the planets be contrary, yet the sphere where they are fixed, the natures wherewith they were created, are the same still.

Though the providences of God have various motions, yet the spring of his counsel, the rule of his goodness, the eye of his wisdom, the arm of his power, are not altered; he acts by the same rule, disposes by the same wisdom, orders according to the same righteousness; he is unchangeable in the midst of the changeable effects of providence. The sun is the same body, which admits of no inward alteration, keeps exactly its own motion, though its appearances are sometimes ruddy, sometimes clear, its heat sometimes more faint, at another time more scorching; its distance sometimes nearer, sometimes farther off. He must be very ignorant that thinks the objects upon which we look through a prism or triagonal glass, change their colours as often as they are represented so, in the various turnings of the glass: You see the undulations and wavings of a chain which hangs perpendicularly, one part moves this way, and another that way, but the hand that holds it, or the beam to which it is fastened, is firm and steady.

Distinguish between *preparations to the main work, and the perfection of the work*; between the motions of God's eyes, and the discovery of his strength, his eyes move before his power. The neglect of this was the cause of the *Israelites'* uncharitable censures of the kindness of God: they interpret God's reducing them into the straits near the Red Sea, a design for their destruction, which was but the preparation for their complete deliverance, in a way most glorious to God, and most comfortable and advantageous to themselves.

He that knows not the use of the grape,* would

* Morn. de verit Rel. Christian. cap. 12. p. 210, 211.

foolishly censure a man who should fling them into a wine-press, and squeeze them into mash, which is but a preparation of them to afford that generous liquor which was the end of their growth. God treads his grapes in a wine-press to draw from thence a delicate wine, and preserve the juice for his own use, which would else wither upon the stalk, and dry up to nothing. We judge not the husbandman angry with his ground for tearing it with his plough; nor censure an artificer for hewing his stones, or beating his iron, but expect patiently the issue of the design. Why should we not pay the same respect to God which we do to men in their arts; since we are less capable of being judges of his incomprehensible wisdom, than of the skill of our fellow-creatures? God in his cross providences prepares the church for fruitfulness whilst he ploughs it. He may seem to be digging up the foundations of the church, while he is only preparing to lay the foundation in *Sion* for the raising a noble structure; and in what shape soever he appears in his preparations, he will in his perfection of it appear in glory; *When the Lord shall build up Sion, he shall appear in glory, Psa. 102. 16*; and evidence that he was restoring, whilst we thought him destroying; and healing whilst we thought him wounding.

As God hath settled a gradual progress in his works of creation, so by degrees he brings his everlasting counsels to perfection. The seasons of the year are not jumbled together, but orderly succeed one another; and the coldness of the winter is but a preparation for a seasonable spring, and a summer harvest. We do not unrighteously accuse God of disorder in his common works, why should we do it in his special works of providence? Do we disparage the musician's skill for the jarring and unintelligible touches in the tuning the instrument, but rather wait for the lesson he intends to play? If we stay for God's fuller touches of this great instrument of the

world in the way of his providence, it will, like David's harp, chase away that evil spirit from us which is now too apt to censure him.

Fix not your eye only upon the *sensible operations* of providence, but *the ultimate end*. As in a watch the various wheels have different motions, yet all subservient to one end, to tell the true hour of the day, and the motion of the sun ; so are all the providences of God. Should any have been preserved in the deluge upon some high mountain, who had not known the design of the ark, and had seen it floating upon such a mass of waters, he would have judged the people in it in a deplorable condition, and have concluded that it would have broke against the mountain, or been overturned by the waves; yet that was Noah's preservative.

Had any of us been with Christ, and acknowledged him the Saviour of the world, and yet seen him crucified in such a manner by men, and judged only by that, what wise and what just constructions should we have made of that providence? Much the same as some of his disciples did, *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, Luke 24. 21.* But the whole design is spoiled, we were fools, and he an impostor. Yet this which seemed to be the ruin of redemption, was the necessary high-way to it by God's constitution. No other way was it to be procured ; *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory?* ver. 26. His entrance into glory to perfect our salvation, was the end of the sensible suffering wherein he laid the foundation ; as they charge Christ with imposture, not considering the end, so do we God with unrighteousness, when we consider not his aim.

The end both beautifies and crowns the work ; the remarks of God's glory in the creation are better drawn from the ends of the creatures, and their joint subserviency to them, than from any one single piece of the creation. We must not only consider the present end, but the remote end, because God in his

providence towards his church hath his end for after times. God acts for ends at a great distance from us, which may not be completed till we are dead. How can we judge of that which respects a thing so remote from us, unless we view it in that relation? God's aims in former providences were things to come, his aims in present providences are things to come.

As the matter of the church's prayers, so the objects of God's providences, are things to come; *Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, Isa. 45. 11.* The matter of their prayers then were, that God would order all things for the coming of the Messiah. The matter of the church's prayer now is, that God would order all things for the perfecting the Messiah in his mystical body. The whole frame of providence is for one intire design. It is one intire book with seven seals, *Rev. 5. 1.* The beginning of a book as well as the middle hath relation to the end. The design of God's book of providence is but one in all the seven seals and periods of time.

Consider not only *one single act* of providence, but *the whole scheme*, to make a conclusion. The motions of his eyes are various, but all ends in discoveries of his strength. Men do not argue from one single proposition, but draw the conclusion from several propositions knit together. It is by such a spiritual logic we are to make our conclusions from the way of providence; as in the reading scripture, if we take not the whole period, we may make not only nonsense, but blasphemy;* as in that of the psalmist, *thou art not a God that hath pleasure in unrighteousness.* If a man should read only, *thou art not a God*, and make a full stop there, it would be blasphemy; but reading the whole verse, it is excellent sense, and an honourable declaration of God's holiness.

Such errors will be committed in reading the books of providence, if we fix our eyes only in one place,

* Burges of Justification, part 2. Sermon 2. p. 12.

and make a full stop where God hath not made any. We judge not of a picture by the first draught, but the last lines; not by one shadow or colour, but by the whole composition. The wisdom of God is best judged of by the view of the harmony of providence. The single threads of providence may seem very weak, or knotty and uneven, and seem to administer just occasion of censure; but will it not as much raise the admiration to see them all woven into a curious piece of branched work? Consider therefore God's ways of working, but fully judge nothing till the conclusion, for that is to judge before the time. Judge not then of providence at the first appearance, God may so lose the glory of his work, and you the comfort.

Thirdly. *Inquire* into providence, and *interpret all public providences by this rule.* We must search into it, though we are not able to find out all the reasons of it. What can be a more noble study than that which is the object of God's eternal counsel? We are conformed to God in our wills when we have the same ends in our motions; and we are conformed to God in our understandings when we have the same object of our thoughts; some providences have their interpretation written in their foreheads, we may run and read; such as his signal judgments in the world, which express the very sin for which they are inflicted; others are wrapped up in a harder shell, and more covers, and therefore more labour to reach the kernel; some are too high for our knowledge, none for our inquiry.

It is our duty to seek after God, though we can never arrive to a perfect knowledge of him. *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job 11. 7.* He prohibits not the searching, though he asserts the impossibility of finding him out to perfection. What hath God given us faculties for, but to search after him? and we must not do it to satisfy our curiosity, but to increase our knowledge, and consequently our admi-

ration of his wise and powerful care. Diligence must be used too. Our first thoughts about things of concernment, are usually confused; so are our first sights of providence. Providence is a great deep; deep things are not seen without stooping down. We must *παρακνυσαι*, as the angels do when they search into the things of the gospel, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. But let this aim of God at the good of his church be the rule of your interpretation. Without this compass to steer our judgments by, we may both lose and rack ourselves in the wilderness of providence, and fortify our natural atheism and ignorance instead of our faith.

I must confess the study of providence is in some respect more difficult than in the former ages of the world, because God seems to manage things in the church more by his wisdom than power, which is not so intelligible by man as the sensible effects of his strength. That attribute he manifested most in miraculous ways, and the visible ministry of angels, as we read in scripture stories: now he employs his wisdom more in ordering second causes in ordinary ways to his own high, merciful, and just ends. Yet since the discovering of Christ, God has given us a rule whereby we may discern much of his wisdom in the knowledge of his end, as the knowledge of Christ removes the veil from the scripture in our reading of it. *The same veil remains in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ, 2 Cor. 3. 14, 15, 16;* (which veil is still upon the Jews) and makes us understand those parts of the Old Testament, which otherwise would be utterly obscure; so in the reading the books of providence, the knowledge of this end of God in them, will help us to understand the meaning of that which otherwise would nonplus the reason of man.

He that knows the end of one that is making a watch, will not wonder at his framing small wheels, and filing little pins; but he that understands nothing of the design, would count it ridiculous for a man so

to trifle away his time. Without the knowledge of this end, we shall expose ourselves to miserable mistakes. As Plutarch mistook the cause of the ceasing of oracles, ascribing it to the change of the nature of the soil, not affording those exhalations as formerly; or the death of the demons which gave those oracles. He had judged otherwise, had he known or believed the rising of a higher power, the Sun of righteousness in the world, who imposed silence upon those angels of darkness; the most famous oracles in the world ceasing about the time of Christ. To imagine to interpret the motions of providence without a knowledge of Christ and the design of God for his church, is as vain as to imagine we can paint a sound, or understand a colour by our smell; correct sense by reason in this work, and reason by faith. To what end hath God prescribed faith to succour us in the weakness of reason, if it had been capable to understand his ways without it, and if we make no use of it upon such occasions?

Fourthly. Consider *the former providences* God hath wrought for the church in past ages. Let him not lose the present glory of his past works. *This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord, Psal. 102. 18.* Even for that work of his which is written to be done in former ages. God loves to have his former works read and pleaded. It is a keeping a standing praise of him in the world. We have had the benefit of them, it is fit God should have the glory of them from us, as well as from those who immediately enjoyed them. Our good was bound up in every former preservation of the church. If the candlestick had been broken, where had the candle been? Had the church been destroyed, how could the gospel have been transmitted to us? Let the duty we owe to God's glory, engage us to a consideration of them; and the benefit we have had by them also incite us; we usually forget not things that are strange,

nor things that are profitable; his works of old have been works of wonder in themselves, and profitable to us. To what end are the praises of God discovered to the generations to come, but that they should reflect those praises to heaven again, and convey them down to the generations following? *Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, Psal. 78. 4.*

1. This will *help* us in our inquiries in present providences.

There is a beautiful connection between former and latter providences; they are but several links of one chain. The principle and end is the same; that God from whence they come, that Christ to which they tend, is *the same yesterday to day and for ever*. What God does now, is but a copy of what he portrayed in his word as done in former ages; there are the same goodness, the same design in both. The designs of providence are all of a like temper and disposition. We cannot miss of the understanding of them, if we compare them with the ancient copies: for God is in the generations of the righteous, the same God still. God is the same, his ends are the same, the events will be the same.

2. It will *support* our faith. The reason of our diffidence of God in the cause of the church, is the forgetfulness of his former appearances for her. O! if we did remember his former goodness, we should not be so ready to doubt of his future care. This was the psalmist's care in his despondencies, and in his overwhelming troubles of spirit. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Psal. 77. 9*; but *ver. 10*, he concludes it his *infirmity*, and resolves upon a review of the records of God's ancient works for his people, *and the years of the right hand of the Most High*: these times where he declared his power and his glory, and so proceeds to the height of all their deliverances, *viz.* that out of Egypt.

Does God's wisdom decay? or his power grow feeble? Is not his interest the same? Is he not a God still like himself? Is not his glory as dear to him as before? Hath he cast off his affection to his own name? Why should not he then do the same works, since he hath the same concern? God himself to encourage us, calls them out to our remembrance. *Is my hand shortened that I cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I do dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness, &c. Isa. 50. 2.* Am I not the same God that dried up the sea, that wrought those ancient wonders which amazed the world? What doth your distrust signify but the impair of my power? Rouse up yourselves to a consideration of them! And thence gather fresh supplies to strengthen you in your present dependence upon me! He puts us in mind of them, because we are apt to forget them. When it is said, Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, *Gen. 15. 6*; God answered him, *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, ver. 7*, keep up thy faith, and to that end, remember what I did for thee before in calling thee! Cast thy eye upon that place whence I delivered thee; either from the idolatries of the place, or the persecution he was in for the true worship of God. And as God puts him in mind of his mercy he had shewn to him before for the encouragement of his faith; so the people of God have made use of them to this end.

Goliath's sword was counted by David the fittest for his defence in his flight, because it had been a monument of God's former deliverance of him. When he asks for a sword or spear, *Abimelech* said, *the sword of Goliath whom thou slewest, is here; and David said, there is none like that, give it me, 1 Sam. 21. 9.* How hastily he catches at it! There is none like that sword, that hath so signal a mercy writ upon it. That very sword will

not only defend me against my enemies, but guard my faith against those temptations that would invade it. This encouragement of faith and hope is the end of God in his transmission of the records of his former providences to us; *That the generation to come might know them, and declare them to their children, Psal. 78. 6, 7; from one posterity to another, that they might set their hope in God.*

3. It will *enliven* our prayers.

It is a mighty plea in prayer. How often doth David urge it? Thou hast been my help, thou hast delivered my soul from death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling? but in the church's concerns too. *Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually: remember the marvellous works that he hath done, 1 Chron. 16. 11, 12.* A reflection upon what God hath done, should be enjoined with our desires of what we would have God to do for us. When Moses was praying upon the hill, while Israel was fighting with Amalek at the foot of the hill; he had the rod of God in his hand, *Exod. 17. 9:* that miraculous rod which had amazed Pharaoh, whose motion summoned all the plagues upon them. That rod which had split the sea for their passage, broached the rock for their thirst, and had been instrumental in many miracles: certainly Moses shewed this rod to God, and pleaded all those wonderful deliverances God had wrought instrumentally by it. No doubt but he carried it with him to shew to God for a plea, as well as to the Israelites to spirit their resolutions against their enemies.

4. It will *prevent much sin.* A forgetfulness of his former works is one cause of our present provocations. It was so in the case of the Israelites' sin. *They remembered not the multitude of his mercies, but provoked thee at the sea, even at the Red sea, Psal. 106. 7:* they had lost the memory of so many miracles in Egypt, and which aggravated their sin; *They provoked him at the sea, at the Red sea;* they provoked him

under a present indigency, as well as against former mercy: they provoked him in that place of straits where all the powers on earth could not have relieved them, had heaven neglected them. The provocation you may see, *Exod.* 14. 11, 12, which sprang from a forgetfulness of his kindness so lately shewed to them. How apt are we to forget old mercies, when we are so naturally apt to blot out of our memories mercies newly received? If this were well considered by men, it would prevent their enterprizes against the church, and consequently their shame and ruin. Are there records of any who have hardened themselves against God and prospered, *Job* 9. 4. How might in that reflection be seen the frustrations of counsels, disgracing of attempts, showers of fury and vengeance from heaven upon the heads of such? The reason why the wonderful works of God were to be made known to posterity, was, that they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation of men, *Psal.* 78. 6, 8. If they considered those transactions of God in and for his church, they could no more think to stop the breath of perpetual, powerful providence, than to bridle in a storm, or stop the motion of the sun.

To conclude this: God's providential judgments are to be remembered; though they are for the punishment of the age that feel them, they are also for the instruction of the age which succeeds them; *tell* מרדנ number, be as exact as in your accounts, wherein you take notice of every number, minute, and cypher. The works of providence, as well as the doctrine of God, are parts of a child's catechism: they are to keep up the consideration of them in themselves, and hand them in instruction to their children.

Fifthly. *Act faith* on God's providence. Times of trouble should be times of confidence; stability of heart on God would prevent fears of heart; *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed*; How?

trusting in the Lord; his heart is established, they shall not be moved, Psal. 112. 7. Otherwise without it we should be as light as a cock moved with every blast of evil tidings, our hopes will swim or sink according to the news we hear. Providence would seem to sleep, unless faith and prayer awakened it. The disciples had but little faith in their Master's account, yet that little faith awakened him in a storm, and he relieved them. Unbelief doth only discourage God from shewing his power in taking our parts. *Every one will walk in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever, Micah 4. 5.*

Heathens will trust in their idols, and shall not we in that God that lives for ever? Have we any reason to have a less esteem of our confidence in God, than heathens had of and in their idols? We should do our duty, which is faith and hope, and leave God to do his work, which is mercy and kindness. By unbelief we deny his providence, disparage his wisdom, and strip him of his power; we have none else to trust, no creature can order any thing for the church's good without God's commission and direction; what should we trust him for?—For that wherein his glory is concerned, which is more worth to him than all the world besides. Trust him most when instruments fail. God takes them off sometimes, to shew that he needs not any, and to have our confidence rightly placed on him, which staggered before between him and the creature.

1. All the godly formerly acted faith on a *less foundation*. The godly patriarchs, who lived eight or nine hundred years, depended upon providence that long time, and shall not we for seventy years, the usual term of man's life? They had promises to support them, we have not only the same promise, but the performances of them too. They had providences, we have the same and more, all upon record in scrip-

ture, all since the canon of scripture was closed; whatsoever God hath remarkably done for his people in all ages. Adam had but one promise, and but little experience of God's providence, yet no doubt trusted in him. We have a multitude of promises not only pronounced, but sealed, confirmed by many repetitions, which are fresh obligations laid by God upon himself. The experience of all the providences of God towards his church for above five thousand years, and shall our faith stagger when upon us are come the ends of the world? Does it become us to have our obligations to faith so strong, and our exercise of it so weak?

The promise of Christ, that a virgin should bring forth a son, was thought by God a sufficient security to support their confidence in him against the fury of their enemies; it being a greater wonder that a *virgin* should bring forth a son, than the routing of an host of enemies. Is not then the performance of this God's actual sending his Son to us, *made of a woman*, of a virgin, a higher ground of confidence for the church's success in every thing else, than barely the promise could be? All creatures in danger have a natural confidence in God; *He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth*; but the church's confidence may be more firmly placed in him, because he is particularly the God of their salvation; *By terrible things, in righteousness, wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, Psal. 65. 5.*

2. It is our *only way* to have mercy for the church, and for ourselves. If he *take pleasure in them that hope in his mercy*, as it is in *Psal. 147. 11*, he will take pleasure to relieve them, he will *strengthen the bars of their gates*, ver. 13. If he take pleasure in them that hope in his mercy, then the stronger and more lively their hope is, the more intense is God's pleasure in them. If they do not hope in his mercy, he hath no pleasure in them, and no delight to them.

He hath a goodness laid up for them that fear him, and he will lay it out too for them that trust in him; *O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men? Psal. 31. 15.* It is laid up for all that fear him, but it is wrought for them that trust in him. It is manifested upon special acts of trust and reliance, and wrought before the sons of men. Those that own God publicly in a way of reliance, God will own them publicly in a way of kindness. Faith is the key that unlocks the cabinet of special providence. Those eyes which move about all the world, are fixed upon those that trust in him; *The eye of the Lord is upon them that hope in his mercy, Psal. 33. 18.*

The sixth duty: *Wait upon God* in the way of his providence. Wait upon him as he is a faithful Creator, 1 *Pet.* 4. 19; much more since the title of being our Redeemer is added to that of our Creator, which strengthens his relation to us. Not to wait disparageth his care, bounds his power, or reflects upon his wisdom, as if he had stripped himself of his immense goodness, and forgot both his promise and his people, as if he had cancelled the covenant, and given up his whole interest to the lusts of men. Wait in the saddest appearances; the hour of Christ's death was dismal in the world, and darkness upon the earth; a miraculous eclipse of the sun, taken notice of by the very heathens; yet were we never nearer to happiness than in that dreadful time when our Saviour was most dyed in his own blood. The sanguine complexion of the evening sky, is a presage of a fair succeeding morning; so many times is the red vesture of the church.

1. Wait upon him *obedientially*. Commit your souls to God, but *in well doing*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 19. Use no indirect means; a contempt of the precept cannot consist with faith in either promise or providence. The obeying part is ours, the governing part is God's:

Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long; for surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off, Prov. 23. 17. God will govern all the day, but we must fear him all the day. When fear on our part attends government on God's part, there will be an end of our carnal fears, and a good issue of our hopes. The greatest deliverances of his church have been when his people have stood still, *Exod. 14. 13.* As that deliverance was a type of all future, and a ground of faith; so the carriage God enjoined was a rule to his people in all future straits. It is against the laws of God's government for those listed in his service to stir without order.

The law is our standing-rule of duty. Providence cannot be a standing visible rule, because of the variety and seeming crossness of it sometimes to our apprehensions. Do not presume to lead God, but be led by him: it is our safety to follow him; it is our sin and danger to presume to be his directors. We may lose ourselves when we are our own blind guides, and fall into a ditch; but when we follow God, he hath wisdom to foresee the precipices we may stumble into, and goodness to divert us from them. By interposing carnal devices, men may perhaps have their ends, but with little comfort, perhaps much bitterness to themselves. Jacob, by his hasty using his own and his mother's sinful project for the blessing, got it indeed, but a cross too, for he was a man of sorrows all his days. By waiting in God's way, we shall have our ends with more sweetness, because purely a fruit of God's care and goodness.

2. Wait *patiently*. How often are our spirits troubled about future events, and are afraid of the evil which threatens us, as if we were in pain for God, and in doubt of his wise conduct? Think not God's time too long. He waits as much for a fit opportunity to shew his mercy, as you can wait for the enjoyment of it; *Therefore will the Lord wait that he*

may be gracious unto you ; blessed are all they that wait for him, Isa. 30. 18. It is a part of our blessedness to wait for God, since it is a part of God's kindness to wait for a fit season to be gracious to us. It is not for us to prescribe rules to God, but follow the rules he prescribes to us. He hath freely made his promise, let him be master of his own time to make it good. He will shew as much wisdom in accomplishing, as he did mercy in declaring it. God can do things in a moment, but it is his wisdom to take time, that his people may have time to exercise their trust, their hope, and their patience. He will take time in the ways of his providence, as well as he did in the works of creation. He allotted six days to that which he could have framed in a minute. He is Judge of what is needful for us, and when it is needful for us.

If God should give us that, which is a mercy in its own nature, many times when we desire it, it might not be a mercy. If we will trust the skill of his wisdom for the best season, it cannot but be a mercy, for he will give it us with his own glory and grace wrapped up in it, which will make it sweeter to himself when his wisdom is honoured, and sweeter to us when our good is promoted. God's methods appear in the end both wiser and better than our frames. Infinite goodness aims more at our welfare than our shallow self-love; and infinite wisdom can conduct things to our welfare better than our short-sighted skill. He that knows all the moments of time, knows best how to time his actions. As God staid for a fulness of time to bring the great redemption by Christ into the world, so he stays for a fulness of time to bring all the great consequences and appendices of it unto his church. *Every thing is beautiful in his time ; in its own time.* In God's time, not in ours, &c.

3. Wait *constantly*. Though the wheels of providence seem sometimes to *stand still*, and God seems to put a period to the care of his church, yet let not us neglect our duty. Wait a while, and the

wheels will be put upon their former rolling. Some particular passages of providence may trouble us for a while, but in the issue God may answer our desires above our expectations, and thereby confute our fears. His providences are sometimes like rivers that run under ground, out of sight, but will rise again with a delightful stream, with some new medicinal quality, contracted from the earth by the way. Joseph a prisoner waits upon God for his liberty, and God gives him freedom with preferment. God can bring about his people's safety by unexpected ways. Who would have imagined before, that his own dream should make him a captive, and Pharaoh's dream make him a favourite? The chief butler remembers him not till he was in an exigency, and the divining skill of the wise men of Egypt confounded. Joseph lost nothing by waiting upon God, who made so many circumstances concur to promote his honour. Wait therefore upon him in the sorest afflictions. The church is only afflicted in mercy, but the enemies of it are pulled up by the roots; *I am with thee to save thee; though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, Jer. 30. 11.* God deals with his people as a father, who corrects to reform, not to destroy; but with his enemies he deals as a judge. God's providence, like *Moses' rod*, may seem sometimes a devouring serpent, but it is to convince the Egyptians, and deliver the Israelites.

4. Wait in the *use of lawful means* for perservation; not to use means, is to slight his providence, not to trust it. It seems not to consist with the wisdom of God to order things always so, as to be necessitated to put forth an extraordinary power in things which his creatures by a common providence can naturally accomplish. God saves by natural means; when they will not serve the turn, he will save by supernatural. God chose an ark to preserve Noah in. He did not want supernatural means for his preserva-

tion. He might have caught him up in a cloud, and continued him there till the drying of the waters. Noah doth not dispute the business with God, but prepares an ark according to his order, and he was righteous in his obedience as well as in his trust.

God would not preserve our Saviour by a miracle, when ordinary means would serve the turn. He commands Joseph by his angel to flee into Egypt with the child, *Mat. 2. 13.* Joseph desires not God to preserve him by an extraordinary power, to save his pains of travelling; he submits to God's order, and God quickly clears the way for his return. Indeed sometimes *the wheels of providence are lifted up from the earth*, and do not go in the ordinary tracts; but miracles must be left to God's pleasure, for us to desire them is to tempt our great Governor.

The seventh duty. *Pray for the church.* It is an encouragement that our suit in this case will not be denied. The desire of welfare is conformable to his counsel, which shall stand notwithstanding the devices of men. His counsel in particular concerns of men shall stand, much more is the stability of his counsel for the church, *Prov. 19. 21.* He is a God hearing prayer in a way of common providence, and a God hearing prayer in a way of special attention; *Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer, Psal. 61. 1.* David desires that God would hear him, as more particularly concerned in his case. He is so in the concerns of his church; will he hear an Ishmael crying for himself, and young lions roaring for their prey, and stop his ears to the voice of his own Spirit in his people, pleading for the church, dearer to him than the whole mass of nature? We have greater arguments to use than in any other case. The relation the church hath to God; the affection God hath to the church. *Lazarus whom thou lovest is sick*, was Martha's argument to Christ.

What greater encouragement can there be to our petitions, than God's affection, than God's relation?

God loves to have our affections comply with his ; God loves others the better for soliciting its welfare. Moses had the greatest manifestation of God's love after he had prayed for the Israelites, *Exod.* 32. 32, though in a case of sin ; and presently after, in *Exod.* 33. 11, God speaks with him *face to face as a man speaks to his friend* ; and in the same chapter, and the beginning of *Exod.* 34, God shews him *his glory* as much as he was capable to bear. Daniel was a great petitioner for the church, *Dan.* 9. 3, 21 ; & 10. 2, 5. He was God's great favourite upon that account, and had the clearest and highest revelations made to him of the course of providence in the world.

The eighth duty. When you receive any mercy for the church in answer of prayer, *give God the glory of it*. The variety of his providences gives us matter for new songs. What vollies of joyful shouts ? What hallelujahs to God do we find upon the ruin of antichrist, *Rev.* 19. 1, 2, 3. God calls for praise out of the throne, ver. 5, and the church returns it, ver. 6, 7. It is God who rides upon the cherub, it is God that sits upon the wings of the wind, it is God who is in all instruments to quicken their motions, and direct them to their end.

The ninth duty. *Imitate* God in his affection to the church. Christ did what he did for the good of his church ; God doth what he doth for the advantage of the church. Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ ; let the same end be ours, which is the end of God. Thus we shall be like our Creator, thus we shall be like our Governor, thus we shall be like our Redeemer. Men take it kindly from others that love those they have a respect for. God loves all that love his people, and blesses them that bless them ; *I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, Gen.* 12. 3.

The tenth duty. Look after *sincerity* before God. It is for the security of such that God shews himself strong. No man that fully believes and understands

this doctrine, but should be glad to be of that happy society, that assembly of the first born, who are under the care of the watchful eye, and the mighty power, of the God of the whole earth. When God chose Israel, the very strangers should for their own interest join with them. And to such as *take hold of his covenant*, he promises to *give a name in his house that shall not be cut off*, Isa. 14. 1. Yea, even to the *sons of the strangers that should join themselves to the Lord*, Isa. 56. 4, 5, 6. Let this encourage us to christianity. God never encouraged men to be christians by promises of worldly greatness, but by promises of a constant care of them for their happiness, by promises of making *all things work together for their good*. If God will shew himself strong for those that are perfect in heart towards him, then he hath no strength for those that are unsound and false in heart towards him. No man hath an interest in his special providence without faith. The power, knowledge, wisdom of God, are all set against him. Though the whole world be in commotions, the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the depths of the sea, there is no ground of fear to faith; but what buckler against them hath unbelief and hypocrisy? What security against wrath can riches give you? What defence against his power can your potsherd strength afford you? It was not for Job's wealth that God made his boasts of him, but for his sincerity; *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man?* Job 1. 8. And for the want of this he loathes a world. Labour therefore for sincerity towards God; ask it of God; get the evidence of it, and preserve it.

THE
NECESSITY
OF
REGENERATION.

John 3. 3, 5.

JESUS ANSWERED, AND SAID UNTO HIM, VERILY, VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.—JESUS ANSWERED, VERILY, VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER, AND OF THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

PART I.

OBSERVATIONS ON OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION
WITH NICODEMUS.

God does not force any man's belief—Nicodemus coming to the Saviour by night—Remarks on this circumstance—The authority and wisdom of Jesus as a teacher—A renewed nature the only meetness for heaven—Baptism not regeneration—Why the gospel dispensation is called the kingdom of God—Division of the text.

THESSE words contain the foundation of all practical religion here, and happiness hereafter. It is the principal doctrine Christ, as a prophet, came to teach; and as a king, to work in the heart. It is an answer

to the compliment of Nicodemus who came to him with some veneration. His description is in ver. 1, *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.* 1. His profession or sect, *a Pharisee.* 2. His name, *Nicodemus.* 3. His quality, *a ruler of the Jews*; *Αρχων, a prince, one of the great Sanhedrim, who had the supreme power in all the affairs of religion, even under the Roman government. His coming to Christ is described ver. 2, *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* Where we have,—1. The time of his coming, *by night.* 2. The manner of coming, and speaking to him with reverence, *Rabbi,* a title of honour. He comes to Christ; and is therefore to be commended; he comes by night, afraid publicly to own him. Nicodemus acknowledges him a prophet sent by God; and the reason of his acknowledgment, is the consideration of his miracles, which manifested a divine power, both in the greatness and multitude of them. For he knew that God would not set the seal of his power to one that had not his commission. Miracles are the credential letters, to signify the divine authority of any person sent upon any new dispensation.

Observe,—1. God doth not *force any man's belief*; but gives such undeniable evidences of his will and mind, that not to believe, is positive contradiction to him. When he sent Moses to deliver and give a new law to the Israelites, he attended him with a miraculous power, to testify it to be his will, that what Moses delivered, should be entertained. So it was with our Saviour, and at the first promulgation of the gospel in several places. But when a doctrine is settled, and a church established, God forbears those extraordinary works, as he did the raining down manna after the Israelites' entrance into Canaan, where they might have provision in an ordinary way; and they

had miracles afterward in a more scanty measure. We have now rational ways to introduce us to a belief of the christian doctrine. And though there are no sensible miracles, as before ; yet there hath been in all ages, and is still a miracle kept up in the world, greater than any wrought by Christ upon the bodies of men ; and that is the conversion of many obstinate sinners, and subduing them on a sudden ; which in Christ's account, was the chiefest miracle he wrought when he was upon the earth : *Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard ; how that 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 7. 22.* Christ had cured many in their sight ; but he added in the end of the enumeration, *To the poor the gospel is preached.* The poor are evangelized, brought into a gospel-frame, a renewed state for the kingdom of heaven, which is greater than the raising a man from a natural death to a natural life.

Nicodemus comes by night. He is fond of his own honour, loath to impair it by a free and open confession. He was a *master in Israel.* Had he come by day, his reputation had suffered in the vulgar opinion, who might well wonder, that he, a pharisee of a profound knowledge, should come to receive instruction from the son of a carpenter, a man despised by his fellows of the Sanhedrim. Yet he comes, though by night. Observe, 1. It is a hard matter for us to perform a duty we are convinced of, *without some flaw or imperfection* in it. Nicodemus is convinced by the miracles, of Christ's divine authority ; but he forbears an open acknowledgment of him. He creeps to him in the night, unwilling to be seen with him in the day. If Christ were not a prophet, why should he be acknowledged at all ? If a prophet, why not in the day as well as in the night ? Strange ! not to consult him in the day, whom he confesseth to have his commission from God ! How weak is the

faith of the best at first ! How staggering between Christ and self !

2. *Our own reputation* will be apt to mix itself in our religious services. It is his fear of the loss of this, that makes him chuse the darkness. This greatest piece of the old Adam in us, will be rising in various forms, when we are in the most spiritual exercises. What a contest is there between religion and reputation ! He was willing to gratify the one, but not displease the other.

3. *Ambition* is the great hinderance of a thorough conversion. Nicodemus had a mind to speak to Christ, but his reputation bears too much sway in him against a thorough giving up of himself to him. Hence our Lord asks, *How can ye believe that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which comes from God only ?* John 5. 44.

4. Men may have a high esteem of Christ, and yet not such an esteem as *amounts to a saving faith*. Nicodemus acknowledges him a teacher, and that sent from God ; but not *the* teacher, the great prophet Moses had spoken of. He confesseth him a prophet, but not the *Messiah*. Then look to your estimations of Christ, and see whether they be supreme, superlative, that you esteem him as *the* Saviour, *the* Mediator, *the* Lord and King.

5. Convictions may be a long time, *before there is any appearance of conversion*. If we consider Nicodemus here, only as one convinced of the divine authority of Christ, and not a thorough convert at this time ; for he seems by his questions, ver. 4, and 9, to be rather a malecontent, than a convert ; yet the seed then sown by our Saviour's discourse, sprung up at last in fruit. Upon a signal occasion, he pleads the cause of Christ before a counsel of Pharisees, yet but faintly, *Doth our law judge any man before it hears him, and knows what he doth ?* John 7. 50, 51. Before he would have no witness of his coming to Christ. Here he takes his part, as he might have

done any man's, upon a common principle of justice and equity, that he should not be condemned before he was heard. But there is more generous fruit afterwards, where he joins with Joseph of Arimathea, in doing honour openly to our Saviour's crucified body. *And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, John 19. 39.* What grace he had, seems to have been in a long sleep, but is very vigorous upon its awaking.

6. True grace will one time or other discover itself in opposition to that which was the natural crime before. In both these places, fear had been his sin. It is now over-matched by confidence. He came by night before, now he comes by day. He, and another never named before, Joseph of Arimathea, who being possessed with the same passion of fear, was a disciple in secret, *John 19. 38,* own him publicly at his death; when those that had been familiar with him in his life, forsook him. Christ will make those who are as timorous as hares own his cause, when those that think themselves courageous as lions, turn their backs upon him. Paul had the most transcendent affection to the church, who before was guilty of the smartest persecution. And Peter, after the coming of the Spirit, was as courageous, as before he was cowardly in his Master's cause.

But let us consider our Saviour's answer to Nicodemus; *Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, ver. 3.* Some think that Nicodemus asked a question which is not expressed, but may be gathered out of Christ's answer; and which seems to be this, What is requisite to a man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven? Whereupon Christ tells him, that there was a necessity of being born again. Others think that Nicodemus, asked no question; and that these words are a very proper reply to Nicodemus.

1. Christ answers not his compliment, but useth his *authority acknowledged by Nicodemus, of a teacher*, to instruct him. "Since you acknowledge my commission from God to be a teacher, I will teach you what I have to declare; the great design of my coming, is to bring men to the kingdom of God: and the great means to that, is a new birth, which can only fit you for evangelical truths here, and eternal happiness hereafter." He acknowledges Christ to be a teacher; and Christ in his reply would teach him how to become a christian.

2. Christ frames his answer *according to the Pharisees' corruption*. Nicodemus came by night out of love to his credit, that might be impaired by his coming in the day time. What would the people think? Surely this man, and the rest of his tribe, are not so knowing as they pretend to be, since he comes to Jesus to be taught. Christ's answer therefore very well suits him: "You must become a new man, if you would have acquaintance with evangelical mysteries. Away with your old notions, and Pharisaical pride. Deny your honour, credit, and whatsoever partakes of the name of self. A legal frame and a Pharisaical righteousness will not advance you to the kingdom of God."

3. Christ frames his answer according to his *weakness and ignorance*. Nicodemus acknowledged him a *teacher*, not the *Messiah*. Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself as the Messiah: and therefore by his answer he puts him in mind of the kingdom of God, which signified the kingdom of the Messiah, often denominated in the new testament, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. So that Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself, as the Messiah, not merely as an extraordinary prophet.

Observe from this answer, 1. We shall gain nothing by our applaudings and praises of Christ, *without a renewed nature*. Nicodemus comes with

much reverence; gives Christ the title of *Rabbi*; confesseth him to be sent of God; owns the divinity of his miracles. But Christ doth not compliment him again; takes no notice of his civility; but immediately urges the necessity of regeneration, without which he could not see the kingdom of God, for all his fine praises of him. A new birth, a likeness to Christ in nature, a conformity to him, he accounts an higher estimation of him, than all external applauses.

2. No natural privilege under heaven *can entitle us to the kingdom of grace or glory*, It is not our carnal traduction from the best man. It is no natural birth, with the choicest privileges, gives us a right to either of them. Not the honour of having the law from God's own mouth; the glory of an outward covenant; the treasure of the oracles of God; or the seal of circumcision born in the body, that can instate Nicodemus into this felicity. It is a birth of a higher strain, from an higher principle, a change of nature, and a removal from the old stock.

See how strangely Nicodemus replies upon this discourse of our Saviour. How strangely astonished is this great ruler in Israel, at the doctrine which is absolutely necessary to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven! *Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* ver. 4. What a childish conception hath he of this most heavenly doctrine! Can such an ancient man as I, return to my mother's womb? It is strange, that Nicodemus, being a Pharisee, and so well versed in scripture, should be so ignorant, or at least, guilty of so much inadvertency, as not to think of that place, and other places, which speak of a *new heart* and an *heart of flesh*. He might have considered the design of the legal purifications, which were to represent the inward holiness which ought to be in the persons so purified. Yet he hears him discourse, but doth not comprehend

him. His carnal notion bears sway against spiritual truths.

Observe, 1. A man may have great knowledge of the scriptures, and yet not *understand the necessary and saving doctrines of it*. The doctrine of regeneration was laid down in the whole old testament, though not in that term. Let us take heed how we read the scriptures: not to trouble our heads with needless and curious questions, but with the main mysteries of religion. What could all the knowledge of Nicodemus profit him, if it had been ten thousand times more, without the knowledge and the experience of this doctrine?

2. Nothing is more an enemy to the saving knowledge of gospel-mysteries, than *priding ourselves in head knowledge*. Nicodemus's coming by night, was not only from fear, but pride; that he might not be thought ignorant by the people. Humble men have the soundest knowledge: *The meek will he teach his way, Psal. 25. 9.*

2. *How low was the interest of God in the world at that time?* How had ignorance and error thrust the knowledge of God out of other parts of the world, when it languished so much in the church! How simple must the poor people be, when the students in scripture were no wiser! It is a thing to be bewailed amongst us, that wrangling knowledge hath almost thrust out spiritual. And when christians meet, their discourses are in general more about unnecessary disputes, than the saving mysteries of Christianity, which might produce elevations of heart to heaven. To the exception of Nicodemus, Christ makes his reply: in which you will observe, 1. *A fresh assertion of the doctrine with an explanation: Jesus answered, verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, ver. 5.* In the third verse, Christ lays down the necessity of the new birth; in verse 5,

the necessity of the cause; *except a man be born of water, and of the spirit.* In the first speech he lays down the doctrine: in this he explains the principle, and manner of it; to remove his false apprehensions, wherein he might mean the transmigration of souls, which seems to be an opinion amongst the Jews.

2. A reason to enforce it; *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,* ver. 6. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and can be no more by that principle, for the effect cannot be better than the cause; but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, i. e. hath a spiritual nature. Flesh is taken for man corrupted; *For he also is flesh,* Gen. 6. 3; a mere sensual creature by the loss of original righteousness; by that loss the soul of man was as a body without life; a spiritual carcase as the body is without a soul. Flesh also signifies the whole nature, as in that place, *Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, &c.* Matt. 16. 17. The incarnation of the Son of God, which is the foundation of all evangelical administrations, is above the sphere of nature to discover. Man in his natural generation is but mere nature, and cannot apprehend, cannot enjoy that which is only apprehensible and enjoyable by a spiritual nature; but man regenerated by the Spirit is spiritual, for he is made partaker of the divine nature; so that Christ's argument runs thus:—"No flesh can enter into the kingdom of God: but every man naturally is flesh, unless born again of the Spirit; therefore no man, unless born again of the Spirit, can enter into the kingdom of God. If you could enter into your mother's womb, and be born again, the matter would not be mended with you; you would still be but flesh, and rather worse than better. Therefore that is not the birth that I mean, for the impediment would be as strong in you as before."

These two verses are an answer to the objection of Nicodemus. Nicodemus understands it of a carnal birth. "No," saith Christ; "it is a spiritual birth I

intend ; one that is wholly divine and heavenly. That which you mean, brings a man into the light of the world : that which I mean, brings a man out of the world, into the light of grace. That forms the flesh to an earthly life ; this forms the soul to an heavenly. That makes you the son of man ; this the son of God." All the difficulty lies in ver. 5, in that expression of *water*, &c. Some, as the papists, understand it of the elementary water of baptism ; and some from this place, exclude all children dying without baptism, from salvation. Others understand it of a metaphorical water, as, *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, John 4. 14.* But let us first see, why by water cannot be meant the baptismal water : Regeneration is the mystery and sense of that sacred ceremony. It is indeed signified, represented, and sealed in baptism ; but how, and in what sense, is not my present work to decide.

1. It is strange, that when all agree that the birth here spoken of, is *spiritual and metaphorical*, that the water here should be natural.

2. None could be *saved, unless baptized*, if this were meant of baptism. As if these words, *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you, John 6. 53*, were meant of the supper, none could be saved unless they did partake of it. Whereas Christ lays not the stress upon baptism, but upon faith ; *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned, Mark 16. 16.* He doth not say, he that is not baptized shall be damned, but he lays damnation wholly upon the want of faith. Many have been saved without baptism, none without faith. It is true to say, he that doth not believe, shall be damned ; but it is not true to say, he that is not baptized, shall be damned. Christ said the first, but not the second ; though his discourse had obliged him to say so, had it been true, or had he meant this speech to Nicodemus, of baptismal water. The Spirit

may act out of the sacraments as well as in them. Understand this of the bare want of baptism, not of the contempt or wilful neglect of it. If it were meant of baptism, it was true then that none could be saved without it. How did the thief upon the cross enter into Paradise, which Christ promised him? So that one may enter into heaven without baptism by water, though not without the baptism of the Spirit.

3. Baptism was not then instituted as a *standing sacrament* in the Christian church. The institution of it we find not till after Christ's resurrection; *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, Mat. 28. 19.* And it is not likely Christ would discourse to Nicodemus of the necessity of an institution that was not yet expressly appointed by him, for he discourseth of that which was of *present* necessity; and if this were meant of baptism, then all that died before the institution of it, unbaptized, could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, though believing. Can any thing be necessary before the precept for it be given? It could not be necessary before, as a means, because it is not a natural, but an instituted, means. It must be therefore necessary by virtue of a command; therefore not absolutely necessary before the command, and at the time Christ spoke these words. Some say that Christ meant it not as of absolute necessity at that time, but that it should be so after his death.* That is to give our Saviour the lie, for he spake it of the present time, some years before his death. Besides, it wrongs the goodness of our Saviour, to defer the institution of it so long after, when it was at present necessary for the salvation of Nicodemus. It wrongs his wisdom too, to speak of that to be at present necessary which was not in being, nor would be till after his death.

4. It is strange that our Saviour should speak to Nicodemus of the necessity of baptism, *before he had informed him of the mysteries of the gospel, whereof it*

* Bellarm. de Sacram. Baptism, lib. 1. cap. 5, 6.

is a seal. To speak of the seal, before he speaks of that which is to be sealed by it, is not congruous. For the sacraments being founded upon the doctrine on which they depend, to begin by a sacrament the instruction of a man, is to begin a building by the tiles and rafters, before you lay a foundation, and against the order expressed by our Saviour to the apostles, which puts teaching *before* baptizing, and was always practised in the primitive times, as it now is in all Christian churches, to the adult and grown up. As circumcision was amongst the Jews, not administered to any proselyte before his turning proselyte, and instruction in those laws he was to observe; and then, and not till then, his children had a right to circumcision.

5. Those that understand it of the *baptismal water*, and so make that of absolute necessity, do by another assertion accuse their own exposition of a falsity. For they say that the baptism of blood supplies the want of that of water; and that if either infants, or adult persons, be killed for the Christian cause, they are certainly saved, which cannot be, if the baptism of water were to be understood in this place, and so absolutely necessary. One of these assertions must be false. A martyr dying unbaptised must be damned, and cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, if this place be meant of the water of baptism.

6. It may also be observed, that Christ in the progress of his discourse, makes *no more mention* of water, but of the Spirit; *That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit*; not born of water and the Spirit, which had been very necessary, if water had been of an equal necessity with the Spirit to the new birth. And since Christ mentions it positively, will it be said, that if any be born of the Spirit, without water, he is still but flesh? Water then here is to be taken mystically. Some by water understand the whole doctrine of the gospel; as the waters mentioned through the whole 47th of Ezekiel, signify the doctrine of the gospel. To *drop*, in

scripture, signifies to *teach*, *Amos* 7. 16. *Drop thy word toward the south*, *Ezek.* 20. 46. Others by water understand the grace of regeneration as the principle, the Spirit as the cause, as *He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, *Tit.* 3. 5, 6. What washing he means, is expressed in the renewing of the Holy Ghost; that is, that renewing which is wholly spiritual, as proceeding from the Spirit of God, whence this grace flows. By *water* and *spirit*, are signified one and the same thing: the similitude of water, shewing the cleansing and regenerating virtue of the Spirit; as *fire* and the *spirit* are put together, *Matt.* 3. 11, to signify the refining quality of the Spirit, as fire separates the dross from the good metal; *fire* and *spirit*, i. e. a spirit of fire, of the force and efficacy of fire. This water is the same which God had promised; *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty*, *Isa.* 44. 3; and *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you*, *Ezek.* 36. 25; and, *I will put my Spirit within you*, ver. 27. He there explains water to be the Spirit, *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed*; and, *Isa.* 41. 18, 19, God speaks of the admirable fruitfulness of this water. This shall renew you, and make you fruitful in the kingdom of my Son, where none shall be received who is not born of this divine principle.

Now our Saviour having to do with a Pharisee, who was acquainted with those oracles to make him understand this truth, uses the same words which the prophets had used, and ranks them in the same order; first *water*, then the *Spirit*; that the latter might clear the sense of the former, to prevent Nicodemus from imagining that to be natural which was spiritual and mystical. *Water* and the *Spirit*, signifies the water of the Spirit, or a spiritual water. The Spirit is compared to water in respect of its generative virtue. No fruitful plant but is produced by moisture. Water contains in it the seeds of all things. It was from water and the earth that all things in the lower world

were in the first creation produced. Water is put here as exegetical of the effect of the Spirit; water being the cause of generation by its moisture, uniting the parts together. Our Saviour in both places uses an asseveration, *Verily, verily*; which is spoken, 1. To shew the *infallible necessity* of it:—2. To urge a *special attention*. It is to be believed, because of its *necessity*; it is to be considered, because of its *excellency*.

Born again, "Ἀνωθεν, signifies properly from above: but sometimes it is taken for again. Nicodemus understands it so by his reply, and not of a heavenly birth. Man was born in nature; he must be born in grace. He was born of the *first Adam*; he must be born of the *second Adam*. It is expressed in scripture by various terms: a resurrection to life, a quickening, a new creation, the new man, the inward man, a dying to the world. It is indeed a putting off the old man, the principles and passions, the corrupt notions and affections which we derive from Adam, to devote ourselves to God, to live to Christ, to walk in newness of life.

The kingdom of God, is sometimes taken, 1. for the kingdom of glory: 2. it is sometimes taken for the gospel-state. And the same thing is signified by the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. What is called by Matthew the kingdom of heaven, *Matt.* 4. 17, is called by Mark, chap. 1. 15, relating the same story, the kingdom of God; and the gospel is called the gospel of the kingdom of God, *Mark* 1. 14. It is called the kingdom of God,

1. Because it sets up *the rule and government of God in the world*, above the devil's. The devil had been so long the God of the world, that the interest of God seemed to be overmatched by a multitude of unclean spirits, and abominable idols; and the true God was not known to be the Governor of it. The gospel discovers the true Governor of the world, and sets up his rule and authority.

2. It sets up the *righteousness of God*, above a legal and fleshly righteousness, much in vogue among Jews and Gentiles; but they were wholly ignorant of the righteousness of God, *Rom.* 10. 3.

3. This kingdom is framed and set up by *the Son of God*. The other kingdom, under the law, was settled by God, but by the hand of Moses, a man. This is administered by him through his Spirit, his vicegerent. His royalty did not so eminently appear as in the times of the gospel. The Father appoints the gospel-state in his wisdom, the Son lays the foundation of it in his blood, the Spirit carries it on in the world by his power.

4. In respect of the *service*. It is high and heavenly; serving God in spirit. The service under the legal administration was carnal; the service under the gospel administration is more spiritual, and so more suitable to the perfections of God.

5. In the *issue of it*. It is a *translating us into the kingdom of Christ*, *Col.* 1. 13. The legal ceremonies could not fit men of themselves for glory; they could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But this kingdom of grace prepares us for the kingdom of glory.

Cannot see the kingdom of God. In ver. 5, it is, he *cannot enter* into the kingdom of God. 1. By reason of God's *appointment*. 2. In the *nature of the thing itself*. He hath no fitness for heaven, or heavenly mysteries.

See the kingdom of God. Seeing is taken sometimes for enjoying: not a bare sight, but fruition, *He that believes not the Son, shall not see life*, *John* 3. 36; that is, shall not enjoy life: and *Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*, *Heb.* 12. 14. They shall not see him in a way of glorious enjoyment of him. To have communion with Christ in a gospel-state; to have the enjoyment of Christ in eternal glory, it is necessary we should be stripped of the

corruption of our first nature, and clothed with another by the Spirit of God.

Observe in the verse,—1. The infallibility of the proposition.—2. The necessity of regeneration.—3. The extension of it in regard of the subject:—1. *Subjctum quod recipit*: man; i. e. every man.—2. *Subjctum in quo recipitur*: man; i. e. the whole man, every faculty.—4. The excellency of it implied: *They cannot see the kingdom of God*. But if born again, they shall enjoy the kingdom of God.

PART II.

PROPOSITIONS ON THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

*There are but two states, of sin and righteousness
 The fall of man—Its immediate consequences—Re-
 generation universally necessary—Not possible to
 conceive how God can make any man happy without
 it—Without it the sufferings of Christ were vain—
 The promise of the Spirit proves the necessity of
 regeneration—Necessary in every part of the soul—
 Reason owns the necessity of it.*

THE doctrine now to be discussed is, that the regeneration of the soul, is of *absolute necessity to a gospel and glorious state*.—By regeneration, I mean not a relative, but a real change of the subject, wrought in the complexion and inclinations of the soul. As in the restoring of health, there is a change made in the temper and humours of the body.—As mankind was changed in Adam, from what they were by creation; so men must be changed in Christ, from what they were in a state of corruption. As that change was not only relative, but real, and the relative first introduced by the real; so must this. The relation of a child of wrath, was founded upon the sin committed. Without a real change, there can be

no relative. Being in Christ, as freed from condemnation, is always attended with a walking in the Spirit; and walking is not before living. For the better understanding this point, I shall lay down,

1. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.—2. I shall shew that it is necessary.—1. To a gospel state. 1. To the performance of gospel duties: 2. To the enjoyment of gospel privileges.—2. To a state of glory.

FIRST. Propositions concerning *the necessity of it*.

Prop. I. There are but *two states*; a state of *sin*, and a state of *righteousness*; and all men are included in one of them. All men are divided into two ranks. In regard of their principle, some are in the flesh, some *in the spirit*. In regard of their obedience, some *walk after the flesh*, some after the *spirit*: some are slaves to the flesh, others are led by the Spirit: some live only to self, some live to God. In regard of the exercise of their minds their nobler faculty; some *mind the things of the flesh*, others *the things of the spirit*: some swinishly wallow in sin, others place the delights of their spirits upon better and higher objects.

The scriptures mention no other. A state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God. A state of friendship and fellowship, wherein men walk before God unto all well-pleasing, and would not willingly have an inward motion swerve from his will. One is called *light*, the other *darkness*, *Eph. 5. 8*. One, the children of wrath; the other, children of God. There is no medium between them: every man is in one of these states. All believers, from *the bruised reed*, to the tallest *cedar*; from *the smoking flax on earth*, to the flaming lamp in heaven; from Thomas, that would not believe without seeing; to Abraham, who could believe without staggering, all are in a state of life. And all, from the most beautiful moralist, to the most venomous

toad in nature's field; from the young man in the gospel, who was not far from the kingdom of heaven, to Judas, who was in the very bottom of hell; all are in a state of death. Mere nature, though never so curiously garnished, can place a man no higher. Faith, though with many infirmities, puts us in a state of amity: unbelief, though with many moralities, continues us in a state of enmity.

All men are either the object of God's delight, or of his abomination. The highest endowments of men remaining in corrupted nature, cannot please him. The delight of God then, supposeth some real change in the object, which is the ground of that delight: for God is wise in his delight, and could not be pleased with any thing which were not fit for his complacency. Since original nature in a man cannot displease God, unless it be changed by some fault, because it was his own work; so our present nature cannot please God, unless it be changed by some grace, though it be otherwise never so highly dignified. Whatsoever grows up from the old Adam, is the fruit of the flesh: whatsoever grows up by the new Adam, is the offspring of the Spirit; and upon one of these two stocks, all men in the world are set. Since therefore one is utterly destructive, and cannot please God, though never so well garnished, the other is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Prop. II. It is necessary upon the account of *the fall of man*, and the consequence of it. In Adam we all died. *As in Adam all died*, therefore in Adam we sinned, 1 Cor. 15. 22. *By one man's disobedience many werè made sinners*, Rom. 5. 19. Man cannot be supposed to sin in Adam, unless some covenant had intervèned between God and Adam, whence there arises in the whole human nature a debt, of having righteousness transfused from the first parent to all his posterity: the want of this grace, wherein his posterity are conceived, is a privation, and a crime which

was voluntary in the root and head. This privation of righteousness must be removed. The institution of God stands firm, that Adam and his posterity should have a pure righteousness. It is not for the honour of God to enjoin it so strictly at first, and to have no regard to it afterwards. Now this privation of righteousness, and the unrighteousness which hath taken place in the sons of Adam, cannot be removed without the infusion of grace: for without this grace, he would always want righteousness, and yet be always under an obligation to have it, without the possibility of attaining it.

Were there an indifferency in the soul of man, the writing of moral precepts upon it, by good education, would sway it to walk in the paths of virtue, as an ill education casts it into the ways of sin. But this is not so; for take two persons, let them have the same ways of education, the same precepts instilled into them, as Esau and Jacob had by their father, yet how different were their lives? Esau's was bad, Jacob's not without flaws. Education had not the power to root corruption out of both; no, nor out of any man in the world, without a higher principle. There is some powerful principle in the soul, which leads it into by-paths, contrary to those wholesome rules instilled into it. Hence ariseth a necessity of some other principle to be put into the heart, to oversway this corrupt bias.

By the fall of man there was contracted,—1. An *unfitness to any thing that is good*. Man is so immersed in erroneous notions, that he cannot judge fully of what is good; *To every good work reprobate, Tit. 1. 16.* The state of nature, or the old man, is described, to be *corrupt according to deceitful lusts, Eph. 4. 22.* Deceitful, seducing us from God, drawing us into perdition, by representing evil under the notion of good; which evidenceth our understandings to be unfit to judge without a new illumination; inward and spiritual lusts, which are most deceitful,

being accounted brave and generous motions. Lusts or desires, which shew the corruption of the will by ill habits: lust and sin is the mere composition of corrupted nature; the whole man is full with polluting principles, and degrading appetites. What was preternatural to man in a state of innocence, became natural to him after his depraved state. He is *carnal, sold under sin*. The spring being already out of order, cannot make the motion otherwise than depraved: as when a clock is out of order, it is natural to that condition of it, to give false intelligence of the hour; and it cannot do otherwise, till the wheels and weights be rectified. Our end was actively to glorify God in obedience to him: but since man is fallen, and made unfit to answer this end, there is a necessity he should be made over again, and created upon a better foundation; that some principle should be in him, to oppose this universal depravation, enlighten his understanding, mollify his heart, and reduce his affections to their due order and object.

2. In the fallen state of man there is not only an unfitness, but *unwillingness to that which is good*. We have not those affections to virtue, as we have to vice. Are not our lives, for the most part, voluntarily ridiculous? Had we a full use of reason, we should judge them so. We think little of God; and when we do think of him, it is with reluctance. This cannot be our original state; for surely God, being infinitely good, never let man come out of his hands with this actual unwillingness to acknowledge and serve him; as the apostle saith in the case of the Galatians' errors, *This persuasion comes not of him which calls you, Gal. 5. 8*: This unwillingness comes not from him that created you. How much therefore do we need a restoring principle in us! We naturally *fulfil the desires, or θελήματα, of the flesh, Eph. 2. 3*. There is then a necessity of some other principle in us, to make us fulfil the will of God, since we were created for God, not for the flesh. We can no more be

voluntarily serviceable to God, while that serpentine nature, and devilish habit remains in us, than we can suppose the devil can be willing to glorify God, while the nature he contracted by his fall, abides powerful in him. It is as much as to say, that a man can be willing against his will. Nature and will must be changed, or we for ever remain in this state. Man is *born a wild ass's colt*, *Job* 11. 12. No beast more wild and brutish than man in his natural birth; and he is like to remain in his wild and wilful nature without grace: a new birth can only put off the wildness of the first.

3. There is not only unfitness and unwillingness, but a total *inability to good*. How early do men discover an affection to vice! How greedily do they embrace it, notwithstanding rebukes from superiors, exhortations from friends, with the concurrence of conscience, giving its amen to those dissuasions! and yet they are carried against all those arguments; *Deceived by sin, slain by sin, sold under it*, *Rom.* 7. 11, 14. This is the miserable state of every son of nature. Do we not find, that men sometimes wrapped up in retirement, in consideration of the excellency of virtue, are so wrought upon by their solitary meditations, that they think themselves able to withstand the strongest temptation? Yet we see oftentimes, that when a pleasing temptation offers itself, though there be a conflict between reason and appetite, at length all the considerations and dictates of reason are laid aside; the former ideas laid asleep, and that is committed which their own reason told them was base and sordid. So that there is something necessary, beside consideration and resolution, to cure the maladies of the soul.

No privation can be removed, but by the introduction of another form; as when a man is blind, that blindness which is a privation of sight, cannot be removed, without the power of seeing again. Original sin is a privation of original righteousness, and an in-

roduction of corrupt principles, which cannot be removed, but by some powerful principle contrary to it. Since the inability upon the earth, by reason of the curse, to bring forth its fruits in such a manner as it did, when man was in the state of innocency, the nature of it must be changed to reduce it to its original fruitfulness. So must man, since a general defilement from Adam hath seized upon him, be altered, before he can bring *forth fruit to God*. We must be united to Christ, engrafted upon another stock, and partake of the power of his resurrection; without this, we may bring forth fruit, but not fruit to God. There is as utter an impossibility in man, to answer the end of his creation, without righteousness, as to act without life, or act so vigorously without health and strength. It is a contradiction, to think a man can act righteously without righteousness; for without it, he hath no capacity to answer the ends of his creation.

Well then, since there is an unfitness, unwillingness, and inability in man, there is a necessity for a new life, a new nature, a new righteousness. There is a necessity for his happiness, that he should be brought back to God, live to God, be a son of God; and this cannot be without regeneration. For how can he be brought back to God, without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God, that hath no spiritual life? How can he be a son of God, who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

Prop. III. Hence it follows, that it is *universally necessary*. Necessary for all men. Our Saviour knows none without this mark; *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, 2 Cor. 5. 17.* There must be the habitation of the Spirit; *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. 8. 9.* There must be a crucifixion, not only of the corrupt affections of the flesh, but of the flesh itself; *They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, Gal. 5. 24.*

The old nature must be killed, with all its attendants. There is no sonship without likeness to God; there is no such relationship without a child-like nature. Let a man be of whatsoever quality in the world he may; of whatsoever age, of whatsoever moral endowments; *except a man, every man, be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* Our Saviour did not say, he is in danger not to see the kingdom of God, or he may come short of it; but he shall not, he cannot. There is no possible way but this; there is no other door, but by that of a new birth. Salvation cannot be attained without it; and damnation will certainly be the issue of the want of it. As there is no other name under heaven, by which we can be saved, but by the name of Jesus Christ; so there is no other way under heaven, wherein we can be saved, but by the birth of the Spirit. And this birth of the Spirit is necessary therefore in all places, in all professions. It is not necessary only in Europe, and not in Africa. Let a man be what he will, in any place under heaven, he must have a Jesus to save him, and an Holy Ghost to change him. It is one and the same Spirit that acts in all, and produces the same qualities in all. Let men's religion and professions be what they will; there is no salvation in any profession, or any kind of opinion, but by regeneration. It is not necessary our understandings should be all of one size, that our opinions should all meet in uniformity; but it is necessary we should all have one spiritual nature. It is as necessary to the being of a good man, that he should be spiritual, as to the being of a man, that he should be rational; though there is a great latitude and variety in the degrees of men in grace, as well as their reasons; some are of little faith, some of great faith; some babes in Christ, some strong men. It is not necessary all should be as strong as Abraham; but it is simply necessary all should be new born, as Abraham.

1. Righteousness was necessary *before the Fall.*

The new birth is but the beginning of our restoration to the state in which we were before the Fall. Adam could not have been happy without being innocent. The holiness of God could not create an impure creature.

2. *After the fall* it was necessary ; continually necessary from the first moment of the fall. This work of regeneration, is included in the first promise, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, Gen. 3. 15.* Naturally we have a mighty friendship to Satan, a friendship to his works, though not to his person. But if Jesus Christ, who is principally meant by this seed of the woman, had an enmity to Satan, then all Christ's seed must be possessed with the same Spirit. For when the seed of the woman was to break the serpent's head, it was necessary that those who would enjoy the fruit of that conquest, should be enemies to the nature of the devil, and the works of the devil ; otherwise they could not join with that interest which overthrows him. It is unreasonable to think the head should have an enmity, and the members an amity : and we cannot have an enmity to that which is the same with our nature, without a change of disposition. It is not a verbal enmity that is here meant. While we pretend to hate him, we may do his pleasure ; and Satan is never troubled to be professedly hated, and really obeyed. As wicked men do the will of God's purpose, while they oppose the will of his precept ; so they do the devil's will many times, while they think they cross it. There must be a contrary nature to Satan, before there can be enmity. That foolish appetite, affected sensuality, indulgence to the flesh, the cause of our first friendship with Satan, must be changed into divine desires, affection to heavenly things, a mortification of the flesh, before a man can part with this friendship. There must be a change in the conformity of the soul to the nature of the devil, before enmity against him. We are never enemies to those that encourage us in what we

affect. His nature can never be altered by reason of the curse of God upon him; therefore ours must, if ever the league be broken. In *Isa. 65. 25*, it is said, *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox, and dust shall be the serpent's meat.* The nature of men may be changed by the gospel; but dust shall always be the serpent's meat. The saving some by water in the deluge, was a figure of this inward baptism, which is the *answer of a good conscience towards God*, *1 Pet. 3. 20, 21.* As the old world was so corrupt, that all must be washed away before it could be restored; so is the little world of man. The cloud and sea through which the Israelites passed, signified this, as the Apostle informs us; *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea*, *1 Cor. 10. 2.* Whereupon some think, there were some sprinklings of the water upon them, as they stood like two walls, to favour their passage.

3. Necessary in *the time of the law.* By the moral law, this renewing was implied in the first command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* We cannot suppose that command only limited to our not serving an outward image. Is not the setting up self, our own reasons, our own wills, and bowing down to them, and serving them, as much a sin, as the bowing down to a senseless image? Nay, it is worse than the adoring of an image, since that is senseless; but our wills are corrupt, and are no more fit to be our God, than an image is fit to be a representation of him. So that in the spiritual part of the command, this must be included, to acknowledge nothing as the rule of perfection, but God. If all idolatry were forbidden, then that which is inward, as well as that which is outward. If we were to have no other gods before him, then we were to prefer nothing inwardly before him; we were to make him our pattern, and be conformed to him; which we cannot, without another nature than that we had by corruption. Upon this

are those scriptures founded which speak of *covetousness* as idolatry; that if any man *love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*. Now the preferring self before God, is the essential part of the corrupt nature; therefore all men by the law of nature, which is the same with *the moral law*, and the Jews, to whom this law was given, were bound to have another nature than that which was derived from Adam, which essentially consisted in the making ourselves our God. Self-esteem, self-dependance, self-will, is denying affection and subjection to God. By the *ceremonial law* this appears more plainly. Their duty was not terminated in an external observance of the types and shadows under the law; but the heart work God intended to signify to them in all those legal ceremonies. As sacrifices signified a necessity of expiation of sin; so their legal washings represented to them the necessity of regeneration.

Therefore God is said not to require the sacrifices of beasts; *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required, Psal. 40, 6*, viz. as the ultimate object of his pleasure; but as representations of Christ, the great sacrifice. So neither did he command circumcision, and other legal purifications, for any thing in themselves, or any thing they could work, further than upon the body; but to signify an inward work upon the heart. Hence they are said not to be commanded by God; *For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, Jer. 7. 22, 23*. That is, God did not principally require these, as the things which terminated his will and pleasure; but an obedience to him, and walking with him, which cannot be without an agreement of nature; for *how can two walk together unless they be agreed?* Hence God speaks so often to them of the circumcision of the heart; and promises this circumcision; *And the Lord thy God will circum-*

cise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, &c. Deut. 36. 6. And Paul expressly saith, that *he was not a Jew, Rom. 1. 18, 19*, that is, a spiritual Jew, one of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who had the *circumcision* that was *outward in the flesh*; but he that had that of *the heart*. So among us, many confide in baptism, which signifieth nothing to men grown up, without an inward renewal, and baptism of the heart, no more than outward circumcision did to them.

4. The obligation upon us is *still the same*. The covenant made with Adam, was made perpetually with him for all his posterity; therefore all his posterity by that covenant, were perpetually obliged to a perfect righteousness. If God had made this covenant with Adam, that he should transfuse this original righteousness to his posterity only for such a time, then indeed, after the expiration of the term, the obligation had ceased, and none had been bound to have it, as a debt required by God. The fault of wanting it had been removed, without any infusion of grace; because the time being expired, and so the obligation ceasing, it had not been a fault to want it; neither could Adam's posterity have been charged with his sin, because the want of righteousness, after the expiration of the time fixed, had not been a sin. But because there was no time fixed, but that it was perpetually of force, as to righteousness, which was the main intent of it, we still remain under the obligation of having a righteous nature. Now God seeing the impossibility of answering this obligation in our own persons, by our own strength, appoints a way whereby we may answer it in a second head, not annulling the former covenant as to the essential part of it, which was a righteous nature, but mitigating it; as the chancery annuls not the common law, but sweetens the severity of it.

This latter covenant, is called an *everlasting covenant*. Not that the obligation of the other to righteousness, has ceased, but transmitted to another head; which head cannot possibly fail, as our former did,

who hath both a perfect righteousness in himself, and hath undertook for a perfect righteousness in his people, which he is able to accomplish; and to that purpose he begins it here, and perfects it hereafter. To this purpose, *Psal. 89, 18, My covenant shall stand fast with him*; that is, with Christ; and if his people sin, as he expresses it afterwards, yet *my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him*. In this respect Christ is called the *covenant of the people, Isa. 41. 6*. And the end of placing David over his people, is not to give way to licentiousness, and maintain men in an hostile nature against God; but that they might *walk in his judgments, and observe his statutes, Jer. 37. 24*. And that everlasting covenant of peace he would make with them, is in order to sanctify them, *Jer. 37. 26, 28*. When God would make an everlasting covenant of peace with them, it was to set his sanctuary among them, and to let the heathen know, that the Lord did *sanctify Israel*. And the end of this covenant, is to put *his law into the inward parts, Jer. 31. 33*.

Christ undertook to keep up the honour of God, which was violated by the breach of that covenant, to *make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9. 14*. This obligation he entered into for us; and in him we are complete, who hath undertaken for our perfect righteousness; of our persons, by his own righteousness; of our nature, by inherent righteousness; as it follows, *In whom you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, Colos. 2. 11*. This obligation still remains upon him, and upon us in him; and to him we must have recourse, for a full accomplishment of it. And this cannot be without a new birth here, which ends in perfection hereafter. And Christ, by a plain precept, hath made it absolutely necessary to all under the gospel administration.

So that no age, no time, no administration, excludes

it. It was as necessary to Adam, the first man, as to the last that shall be born. What was always necessary, is absolutely necessary, and admits of no exception. And therefore the removal of the diabolical nature, is indispensable to him and to us, since we are all the posterity of Adam, and the inheritors of his corruption.

Proposition 4. Hence it follows, that it is so necessary, that it is not conceivable by any man in his right wits, *how God can make any man happy without it.* It is not for us poor shallow creatures to dispute what God can, and what God cannot do; what God may do by his absolute power; but yet it seems a contradiction, that God should make man happy without regeneration. What semblance of reason can be given, that any one who is a slave of Satan, a child of wrath, can be made the son and friend of God, without an expulsion of that nature which rendered him criminal, and restoring that in some degree which renders him innocent?

Without habitual grace, sin is not taken away; and as long as a man remains under sin, how can he be capable of any communion with God? For he cannot be at one and the same time under God's greatest wrath, and his highest love. How is it possible, that one can have an enjoyment of eternal life, who hath nothing in him but a relation to eternal death? God made man's nature fit for his communion; man made himself unfit by guilt and pollution. This unfitness must be removed by regeneration, before his privilege can be restored. Not that this restored righteousness is the cause of our communion with God, but a necessary requisite to it. No doubt, but God might have restored this righteousness, without admitting man to a converse with him, if there had been no covenant made to that purpose. That God may give grace without glory, is intelligible; but to admit a man to communion with him in glory, without grace, is not intelligible.

1. It is not agreeable to God's *holiness*, to make any an inhabitant of heaven, and converse with him, in a way of intimate love, without grace; *The righteous Lord loves righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright, Psal. 11. 7.* He therefore cannot love an unrighteous nature; because of his love to righteousness; *his countenance beholds the upright;* he looks upon him with a smiling aspect; and therefore he cannot favourably look upon an unrighteous person. So that this necessity is not founded only in the command of God, that we should be renewed; but in the very nature of the thing; because God, in regard of his holiness, cannot converse with an impure creature. God must change his nature, or the sinner's. There can be no friendly communion between two of different natures, without the change of one of them into the likeness of the other. Darkness and light can never agree. God cannot love a sinner, as a sinner, because he hates impurity by a necessity of nature, as well as a choice of will. This change cannot be then on God's part. It must therefore be on man's part; and it must be by grace, whereby the sinner may be made fit for converse with God; since God cannot embrace a sinner in his dearest affections, without a quality in the sinner suitable to himself. All converse is founded upon likeness in nature and disposition.

2. It is not agreeable to God's *wisdom*. Is it congruous to the wisdom of God, to let a man be his child, and the child of the devil at the same time? Is it fit to admit him to the relation of a son of God, who retains the enmity of his nature against God; to make any man happy with the dishonour of his laws, one that cannot bear him, but abhors his honour, and the apprehensions of his holiness? Man naturally looks upon God under some dreadful notion; and hath an utter aversion to him. Alienation and enmity are inseparable; *You who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds, Col. 1. 21.* It doth not

consist with the wisdom of God, to make any man happy against his will ; God therefore first changes the temper of the will, by his powerful grace, and by degrees fitting him for happiness with him. It is not fit corruption should inherit incorruption, or impurity be admitted to an undefiled inheritance ; therefore God brings none thither, who are not first *begotten to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,* 1 Peter 1. 3, 4. It cannot be honourable for the wisdom of God, to give a right to eternal life, and bestow his love upon one that resolves to give his own heart to sin and Satan.

This, of which I have now discoursed, is founded upon men's natural notions in their right reason. But if we look into the scriptures, it is certain that a man without a new birth, can have no right to happiness; by any covenant of God, by any truth of God, by any purchase of Christ. God never promised happiness without it; Christ never purchased it for any one without a new nature. No example is there extant of any person whom God hath made happy without this change. Nor is there any other way possible. Therefore if there be any one that hopes to enjoy everlasting happiness without regeneration, he expects that which God never yet bestowed, and which God cannot bestow without dishonour to his holiness and wisdom. I beseech you, therefore, let none of you build your hopes upon such vain foundations ; you must be holy, or you shall never see God to your comfort.

Prop. V. It is so necessary, that the coming and sufferings of our Lord and Saviour would seem *insignificant without it*. That regeneration was a main end of his coming, is evident by his making this one of the first doctrines he was sent from God to make known. Jesus Christ came to glorify God and himself in redeeming his people. And what glory can God have,

what glory can Christ have, if there be no characteristic difference between his people and the world? And what difference can there be, but in a change of nature, as the foundation whence all other differences result? The righteousness which is given through our Mediator, is the same essentially as that we had at first. And his priestly office was to reconcile, and bring us to God; his prophetic, to teach us the way; and his kingly, to work in us those qualifications, and bestow that comely garb upon us, that was necessary to fit us for our former converse with God. Our *second Adam* would not be like the first, if he failed in this great work of conveying his righteous nature to us, as Adam was to convey his original righteousness to his posterity. As that was to be conveyed by carnal generation; so the righteous nature of the second Adam, is to be transmitted to us by spiritual regeneration. In this respect, renewed men are called his seed, and counted to him for a generation; *A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation,** *Psal. 22. 30.* It shall be accounted as much the generation of Christ, as the rest are the generation of Adam; as if they had proceeded out of his loins, as mankind did out of Adam's. As God looks upon believers as righteous through the righteousness of Christ, as if it were their own; and so he accounts them as if they were the generation of Jesus Christ himself.

1. Christ came to save *from sin*. Salvation from sin was more his work than barely salvation from hell; *He shall save his people from their sins, Matt. 1. 21.* From sin, as the cause; from hell, as the consequence. If from sin, was it only from the guilt of sin, and to leave the sinful nature unchanged? Was it only to avert punishment, and not to prepare for glory? It would have been then but the moiety of redemption, and not honourable for so great a Saviour. Can you imagine that the death of Jesus Christ, being necessary for the

recovery of a sinner, was appointed for an incomplete work, to remit man's sin, and continue the insolence of his nature against God? It was not his end only to save us from wrath to come, but to save us from the procuring cause of that wrath; not forcibly and violently to save us, but in methods consistent with the honour of God's wisdom and holiness. Our Lord came to *redeem us from all iniquity*, all parts of it, *by purifying unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, 1 *Tit.* 2. 14; and that we might have a holy nature, whereby we might perform holy actions, and be as zealous of good works, and the honour of God, as we had been of bad works, and to bring dishonour to him. It was also the *end* of his resurrection, to *quicken us to a newness of life*. If any man, without a new nature, could set foot into heaven, this great design of the death and resurrection of Christ would be insignificant. Christ came to take away sin, the guilt by his death, the filth by his Spirit, given us as the purchase of that death. In taking away sin, he takes away also the sinful nature.

2. Christ came to destroy *the works of the devil*; For *this purpose the Son of God was manifested; that he might destroy the works of the devil*, *John* 3. 8. These works are two: sin, and the misery consequent upon it. Upon the destruction of sin, necessarily follows the dissolution of the other. If the sinful nature were not taken away, the devil's works would not wholly be destroyed; or if the sinful nature were taken away, and a righteous nature not planted in the stead of it, he would still have his ends, in depriving God of the glory he ought to have from the creature; and the creature could not give God the glory he was designed by his creation to return, unless some nature were implanted in him, whereby he might be enabled to do it.

Would it then be for the honour of this great Redeemer, to come short of his end against Satan, to let all the trophies of Satan remain in the errors of the

understanding, perversity of the will, disorder of the affections, and confusion of the whole soul? Or if our Saviour had only removed these, how had the works of the devil been destroyed, if we had laid open to his assaults, and been liable the next moment to be brought into the same condition? which surely would have been, were not a righteous and divine nature bestowed upon the creature.

3. Christ came to *bring us to God*; *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. 3. 18. Was it to bring us to God with all our pollutions? No; but to bring us in such a garb as that we might be fit to converse with him. Can we be so without a new nature, and a spiritual likeness to God? Would that man who should bring another to a prince to introduce him into favour, bring him in such a garb as he knew was hateful to the prince? Neither will our Saviour, nor can he, bring sinners in such a state to God; because it is more contrary to the nature of God's holiness to have communion with such, than it is contrary to the nature of light to have communion with darkness. Can it be thought that Christ should come to set human nature right with God, without a change of that principle which caused the first revolt from God? Besides, since the coming of Christ was to glorify God in all his attributes, as well as to save us; how can God be pleased with the effects of Christ's death, if he brought the creature to him with all its former enmity and pollution? Will you say his mercy would be glorified? How can that be, without injury to his purity, and a provocation to his justice? Suppose such a dispute were in God, would not holiness, wisdom, justice, joined together, decide against mercy?

But since there can be no such dispute, how can we conceive that mercy, an infinite perfection in God, can desire any thing to the prejudice of the honour of his holiness, justice, and wisdom? Well then: if we expect

happiness without a renewed nature, we would make Christ a *minister of sin*, as well as of righteousness, *Gal. 2. 17, &c.* As there is a justification by him, so his intent was to plant a living principle in us, whereby we might be enabled to live to him. It is in vain then, to think of finding any benefit by the *death of Christ*, without a new nature.

Prop. VI. The *end of the Spirit's coming* manifests it to be necessary. We are said therefore to be *saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. As God, by his Spirit moving upon the face of the waters, created the world; so God, by his Spirit moving upon the face of the soul, new creates all the faculties of it. Can the coming of Christ, and the coming of the Spirit, the most signal favours of God to mankind, be intended for no other end than to convey to us the mercy of God, with the dishonour of his holiness; to change our misery without changing our nature, and putting us in a capacity both to glorify God, and enjoy him? To what purpose doth the Spirit come, if not to renew? Whatsoever was the office of the Spirit, cannot be supposed to be exercised without this foundation. Can there be any seal of the Spirit, without some impression made upon the soul like to the Spirit, which is the seal whereby we are sealed? Can he be witness to us, that we are the children of God, if there be no principles in us suitable to God, as a Father? Is the Spirit only to bring things to remembrance for bare speculation, without any operative effect? Is he to help us in prayer? How can that be, without giving us first a sense of what we need, and a praying heart? And how can we have a praying heart till our natures are changed? He is a *quickening Spirit*, *Rom. 1. 4*; *The Spirit gives life*, *2 Cor. 3. 6*; *A Spirit of holiness*, *1 Thess. 4. 8*. How then can he dwell in a soul that hath an unholy nature? Though he find men so at first, would he not quickly be weary of his house, if it continued so? He comes to change our old nature, not to encourage

it. What fruits of the Spirit could appear, without the change of the nature of the soil?

Prop. VII. From all this it follows, that this new birth is necessary *in every part of the soul*. There is not a faculty but is corrupted; and therefore not a faculty but must be restored. There is no part of the whole machine but is out of frame; *The whole mind and conscience is defiled, Tit. 1. 15.* It is clearer to a regenerate soul, that it is so, since by the light of grace he discerns the impurity of every faculty. The more knowledge of God he hath, the more he discovers his ignorance; the more love to God, the more he finds, and is ashamed of his enmity; and though in our imperfect regeneration here, grace and sin are in every part of the soul, yet every faculty is in part renewed; and grace and sin lie not so confounded together, but that the soul can easily distinguish them.

Because there was an universal depravation by the Fall, regeneration must answer it in every faculty. Otherwise it is not the birth of the man, but of one part only. It is but a new piece, not a new creature. This or that faculty may be said to be new, not the soul, not the man. We are all over polluted by sin; and we must be all washed by the water of regeneration. A whole sanctification is the proper fruit of reconciliation; *The God of peace sanctify you wholly, 2 Thess. 5. 23.* Reconciliation was of the whole man; so must regeneration. Sin hath rooted itself in every part; ignorance and error in our understandings; pride; and self-love, and enmity in our wills; all must be subdued by grace, and the triumphs of sin spoiled by a new birth.

Prop. VIII. It is so necessary, that even *the dim eye of natural reason* has been apprehensive of some need of it. And therefore it is a wonder, that there should be such need of pressing it upon men under the light of the gospel. Those doctrines that are purely intellectual and supernatural, are not so easily

apprehended by men, as having no footing in reason, whereby reason is rendered more unpliant to consent to them. But those doctrines that tend to the reformation of man, carry a greater conviction, as having some notion of a depravation, which give them countenance in the minds of men, though not in their affections. Men cannot conceive any notion of God's greatness, majesty, and holiness, but they must also conceive something necessary to an enjoyment of him, besides those natural principles which they find in themselves. Natural reason must needs assent to this, that there must be some other complexion of the soul, to fit us for converse with so pure a majesty.

The wiser sort of heathens saw themselves out of frame; the tumult and disorder in their faculties, could not but be sensible to them; they found the flights of their souls too weak for their vast desires; and that they never came so out of the hands of God; that therefore there was a necessity of some restorative above the art of man, to complete the work. And I think I have read of one of them that should say, "There could not be a reformation, unless God would take flesh." They had the *work of the law written in their hearts*, *Rom. 2. 15.* They knew such works were to be done; and they found themselves unable to do them. From whence it would follow, that there must be some other principle to enable them, than what they had by nature. To this purpose they invented their purgative virtues; and by those, and other means, hoped to arrive to an *ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ*, which they much talked of, as necessary to a converse with God. As they were sensible of their guilt, and therefore had sacrifices for the expiation of that; so they were sensible of their filth, and had their purifications and washings for the cleansing of that.

Hence it was, that they admired those men that acted in a higher sphere of moral virtue and moderation than others. Some of them have acknowledged

the malady, but despaired of a remedy, judging it above the power of nature to cure. Certainly that which the wisest heathens, in the darkness of nature, without knowledge either of law or gospel, have counted necessary; and since it is seconded by so plain a declaration of our Saviour, must be indisputably necessary.* Plato in several places saith, that there was a certain divine principle in our minds at first; but that it was abolished, and God would again renew and form the soul with a kind of divinity.

How vain then are men, how inexcusably foolish, to neglect both the light of the gospel, and that of reason too! that spend not one hour, one minute in a serious consideration of it, and enquiry after it! in slighting their own reason, as well as the express declaration of Jesus Christ! Oh that men were sensible of this which is of so great concernment to them.

* Ficinus in Dionys. de divin. nom. cap. 12.

PART III.

REGENERATION NECESSARY TO A GOSPEL STATE.

Without regeneration there is no suitableness to a gospel state—The end of particular institutions—Regeneration necessary to gospel duties—No act can transcend its principle—Nothing spiritually good can proceed from a corrupt nature—Reasons why unregenerate men are incapable of evangelical services.

FIRST. I COME to show that regeneration is *necessary*.

I. It is necessary to a *gospel-state*.

1. Nothing can exist in a state of being, *without a proper form*. That which hath not the form of a thing, is not of the same species. He cannot be a man, that wants the rational form of a man, a soul. And how can any man be a christian, without that which essentially constitutes a christian? We can no more be christians, without a christian nature, than a man can be a man without human nature. Grace only gives being to a christian, and constitutes him so; *By the grace of God, I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed on me, was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, 1 Cor. 15. 10.* Grace there, is meant of habitual grace, because he speaks of his labour, as the fruit of it. In bodily life, brutes go beyond us; in the vigour of their senses, greatness of strength, temperance, natural affection.

In reason, and moral virtues, many heathens have excelled us. There is something else then necessary for the constitution of a christian, and that is, Christ's living in him by new forming of his soul by his Spirit. As the body lives by the soul, which distributes natural, vital, and animal spirits to every part of the body, for the performance of its several functions; so the soul lives by grace, which diffuses its vigour to every part.

2. There is no suitableness to a gospel state, and government without it. In all changes of government in the world, there is a change in the whole state of affairs, in those that are the instruments of government, in the principles of those that submit to the government. After the fall of man, God set up a new mode of government. All judgment was committed to the Son; *For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, John 5. 11. And hath given him authority to execute judgment, ver. 17.* The whole administration of affairs is put into his hand; not excluding the Father, who still gave out his orders in the government; wherefore he saith, *I can, of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge ver. 30.* There must be therefore some agreement between the frame of this government and the subjects of it. As there is a new Adam, a new covenant, a new priesthood, a new spirit; so there must be a new heart, new compacts, new offerings, new resolutions. New administrations and old services can no more be pieced together, than new cloth and old garments. The gospel state of the church, is called a *new heaven and a new earth.* Man is, by the inclinations of his corrupt nature, obedient to the law of sin. There must be a cure and change of those inclinations, to make them tend to an observance of the orders of this new government, and an hearty observation of it; *Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God, 2 Cor. 5. 17;* but now in a new manner and frame; and this is the

reason rendered, why every man in Christ must be a *new creature*.

3. All the subjects of this government have been brought in *this way*, not one excepted. Though God hath chosen some that he would bless for ever under this evangelical government, yet notwithstanding the purpose of God, they are in as great unfitness for this state, as the worst of men, till God fashions them, to be vessels of honour to himself. It is not God's choice of any man, which puts him into a gospel state, without the operation of the Spirit, renewing the mind, and fitting him for it. All that were designed by God's eternal purpose, were to be brought in by a new birth; *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, 2 Thes. 2. 13.* And by this they were fortified against all those workings of the mystery of iniquity, against the government of Christ, and the state of the gospel, which would be damnable and destructive to many; for he had spoken of that before, upon which occasion he denominates his church; *a chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people 2 Pet. 2. 9.* Peculiar they could not be, unless they had something of an intrinsic value in them above others, and a peculiar fitness for special service, and to offer spiritual sacrifices; therefore called also a *royal priesthood*.

4. The end of the particular institutions, of initiation or admission, under the two different administrations of this government, was to signify this; of *circumcision* under the law, and *baptism* under the gospel. Both signified the corruption of our nature, and the necessity of the circumcision of the heart, and the purification of nature. Hence baptism is called *the laver of regeneration, Tit. 3. 5*; many understanding it of baptism. Not that these conferred this new nature in a physical way, or that it was always conferred in the administration of them; but the necessity of having this, was always signified by them. Therefore one of the Jews,

against the opinion of his countrymen, saith absolutely, it is a madness to think that those ceremonies, under their administration, were appointed only for the purification of the body, without that of the soul. And, saith the Apostle, *He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit. Rom. 2. 29.* So that partaking of baptism, and being intrusted with the oracles of God, make a man no more a christian, than circumcision, &c. made a man a Jew. He is only a christian that hath a christian nature; the necessity of this nature was evidenced and signified both by the one and by the other. In every state there are duties to be performed, and privileges to be enjoyed. So likewise in the gospel state. Without a new birth, we cannot perform the one or be capable of the other.

I. Regeneration then must be necessary to the performance of *gospel duties*.

There can be no *preparation* to any service without it. Man's soul at first, could make spiritual music to God, till the flesh disordered the strings; and no music can be made, till the Spirit puts the instrument in tune again. In Jesus Christ we *are created to good works, Eph. 2. 10.* Therefore no preparation can be before the new creation, no more than there was a preparation in the matter without form and void, to become a world. What evangelical duties can be performed without an evangelical impression, without the forming of Christ and the doctrine of Christ in the heart; not only in the notion, but the operative and penetrating power of it? The heart must be first moulded and cast into the frame of the doctrine of the gospel before it can obey it; *But ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered unto you; or, unto which you were delivered, Rom. 6. 17.* The mould wherein a thing is cast, makes it fit for the operation for which it is intended. The ship that wants any material thing in its make, cannot sail well, and he that wants grace, will be carried away with the breath.

of every sin and temptation. All the motions produced naturally in ways of duty by other principles, cannot make an aptitude to divine services, no more than a thousand times flinging up a stone into the air, can produce any natural fitness in it for such an elevation. Where should we have any *preparation*? It cannot be from Adam; he died a spiritual death by his sin, and had no natural fitness for any spiritual service; and therefore cannot convey more to his posterity than he had by nature. What grace he had afterwards, was bestowed upon his person, not upon the nature which was to be transmitted to his posterity.

Therefore we cannot perform any *evangelical service* without a new nature. If we have no natural preparation, we can have no natural action. The law must be written in our hearts, before it be formed into the life; *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, Jer. 31. 33, 34.* It is then, and then only, that we have a practical and affectionate knowledge of God; *And they shall know me from the least unto the greatest.* Restoration to a supernatural life must be before there can be supernatural actions; a just nature, before a just walk; *The just shall walk in them, Hosea 14. 9;* that is, in the ways of God. The motion of the creature is not the cause, but the effect of life: the evangelical service is not the cause of righteousness, but the effect. We cannot walk in one commandment of God, till the *law be written in our inward parts, Ezek. 36. 14.* Those that have not a new heart, cannot walk in God's statutes. We can never answer the terms of the covenant, without a new nature. For,

1. No act can *transcend the principle of it.* There is a certainty in this rule; that the elevation of an inferior nature, to the acts of a superior nature, cannot be, without some inward participation of that superior nature. The operation of every thing follows the nature of the thing. A beast cannot act like a man, without partaking of the nature of a man; nor a man

act like an angel, without partaking of the angelical nature. How then can a man act divinely, without a participation of the divine nature? Duties of a supernatural strain, as evangelic duties are, require a supernatural frame of spirit. Whatsoever service therefore proceeds from mere nature, cannot amount to a gospel service, because it comes not from a gospel principle. We cannot believe without a habit of faith, nor love without a habit of love; for this only renders us able to perform such acts. Justification is necessary to our state, as well as regeneration; but regeneration seems to be more necessary to our duties than the former; this principally to the performance of them, the other to the acceptance of them.

2. *The nature always tinctures the fruit of it.* Our Saviour, by his *interrogation*, implies an impossibility, that those who are evil, should speak good things; *Oh generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh, Mat. 12. 34.* The very hissings of a viper proceed from the malice of its nature. As the root is, so is all the fruit. From one seed many grains arise, yet all partake of the nature of that seed. Streams partake of the quality of the fountain. If the seed, root, and fountain be good, so is whatsoever springs from them. There is not one righteous man by nature, neither Jew nor Gentile, all are concluded under sin; *There is none righteous, no, not one; none that understands and seeks God, &c. Rom. 3. 10.* He adds *not one*, twice; he exempts none; not one righteous by nature; not one righteous action by nature; *none that doth good, no, not one.* He applies it to all mankind. A poisonous nature can produce nothing but poisonous fruit. Whatsoever riseth from thence, though never so specious and well coloured, is evil, and unprofitable. If the vine be empty, the fruit will be so too. Ephraim is an empty vine; he brings forth fruit to himself, or, equal to himself,* *Hos. 10. 1.*

* וְשׂוּי.

Unless the tree be good, the fruit can never be generous, *Mat.* 7. 17, 18. We must have the Spirit, before we can bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. All good services are related to this, as effects to their cause. So that what a man doth by an act of reason, and natural conscience, and good education, if his understanding and conscience remain wholly under their natural pollution, the service is not good, because the soul is corrupt; much less are those services good, which are the fruit only of humour. How the soul can be habitually sinful, and yet the acts flowing from it be good, is not easily conceivable. It is true indeed, that a man that is habituated to one kind of sin, may do an action that receives no tincture from that particular habit, because it doth not proceed from it; as a drunkard gives an alms; his giving alms hath no infection inherent from that particular habit of drunkenness, but from the nature which is wholly corrupt; *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Job* 14. 4. Who can bring a clean service out of an impure heart? Not one man in the world.

1. Not *spiritually*, because we are flesh. God must be *worshipped in spirit*; in a spiritual manner, with spiritual frames, *John* 4. 44. The apostle speaks of *walking in the spirit, and praying in the Holy Ghost, Phil.* 8. 3; *which worship, &c. Gal.* 5. 16. None can act spiritually, but those that are *born of the Spirit, Jude* 20; and no action is spiritual, but what proceeds from a renewed principle. The most glittering and refined flesh, is but flesh in a higher sphere of flesh; therefore whatsoever springs from that principle, is fleshly, upon the former foundation, that nothing can rise higher than its nature. You may as well expect to gather grapes of thorns, as spiritual duties from carnal hearts; *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* If a natural man cannot receive, and cannot know the things of God, because they are *spiritually discerned, Mat.* 7. 16. how should he perform the duties belonging to God, since they are spiri-

tually to be performed? We are naturally more averse to motions upon our wills, than to the illuminations of our minds. An appetite for knowledge, and a flight from God, being both the fruits of Adam's fall, who was both curious to know, as God, and fearing to approach to God after his fall.

There may be some services in natural men, which may look like spiritual; but in the principle they are not so. Many acts are done by irrational creatures, which look like rational acts. As the order among bees, like the acts of statesmen, regulating a commonwealth; their carrying gravel in their fangs, to poise them in a storm, and hinder them from being carried away by the violence of the wind; yet these are not rational acts, because they proceed not from reason, but from a natural instinct put into them by God, the supreme Governor. So that as no action of an ape, though like the action of a man, can be said to be a human act; so no action of an unregenerate man, though like a spiritual action, can be called spiritual, because it proceeds not from a spiritual principle, but from a contrary one paramount in him. And all actions have their true denomination from the principle whence they flow. They may be fruits of morality, and fruits of conscience, but not spiritual fruits which God requires.

Well then: we must be first *built up a spiritual house*, we must be a *priesthood*, before we can *offer spiritual sacrifice*. We must have the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost in us, before we can have the influence of the Holy Ghost upon our services. In all human acts, we should act as rational creatures; in all religious acts, as spiritual creatures. Now as a man cannot act rationally without reason; so neither can we act spiritually, without a divine spirit in us. We are indeed to serve God, and worship him as men: therefore rational acts are due to God in worship, and we are constituted in the rank of rational beings to that purpose. But since our minds are

defiled, they must be purified ; since our understandings are darkened, they must be enlightened. There must be a grace infused, a lamp set up, a spiritual awakening, an invigorating of our reasons and wills, before we can worship God, as God, in a spiritual manner.

2. We cannot perform any evangelical service *vitally*, because we are dead. Our services must be living services, if in any wise they be suitable to a living God. The apostle wishes us, *to present our bodies a living sacrifice, Rom. 12. 1.* He does not mean only our bodies, consisting of flesh and bones, or a natural life ; but he names the body, as being the instrument of motion and service, or it may be, Synecdoche partis pro toto, a part for the whole. Present yourselves as a sacrifice consecrated to God, and living to him, and as living by him.

Upon the loss of original righteousness, another form, or principle, was introduced, called in scripture, flesh, and a body of death. Hence by nature we are said to be *dead* ; and all our works before repentance, are *dead works, Eph. 2. 1. Heb. 6. 1.* And these works have no true beauty in them, with whatsoever gloss they may appear to a natural eye. A dead body may have something of the features and beauty of a living ; but it is but the beauty of a carcase, not of a man. A statue, by the stone cutter's art, and the painter's skill, may be made very comely ; yet it is but a statue still ; where is the life ? Such services are but the works of art, as flowers painted on the wall, with curious colours ; but where is the vegetative principle ? Since man therefore is spiritually dead, he cannot perform a living service. As a natural death incapacitates for natural actions ; so a spiritual death must incapacitate for spiritual actions : otherwise in what sense can it be called a death, if a man in a state of nature were as capable of performing spiritual actions, as one in a state of grace ? No vital act can be exercised without a vital principle.

As Adam could not stir to perform any action, though his body was framed and perfected, till God breathed into him a living soul; so neither can we stir spiritually, till God breathe into us a living principle of grace. Spiritual motions can no more be without spiritual life, than bodily motions can be without an enlivening soul. *The living, the living, they shall praise thee:* and *Psa. 80. 18, Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.* There can be no living praise, nor no living prayer, without a renewed heart. If it be one effect of the blood of Christ, to *purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God,* as *Heb. 9. 14,* then it is clear, that till our consciences are purged from dead works, we cannot serve the living God; for what suitableness can there be between a living God and dead services? Is a putrified carcase, a fit present for a king; or a man full of loathsome disease, fit to serve in a prince's chamber? Our best services, without a new nature, though they may appear varnished and glittering to man, yet in the sight of God they have no life, no substance, but are an abomination unto him, because coming from a dead and noisome heart.

Well then, we must be born again: it is not a dead nature, nor a dead faith, can produce living fruit for God. We may as well read without eyes, walk without legs, act without life, as perform any service to God without a new nature; no, we cannot perform the least: a dead man can no more move his finger than his whole body.

3. We cannot perform any evangelical service *graciously*, because we are corrupt. By the same reason that we are to speak with grace, and to *sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord*; we are to do every other duty with an exercise of grace to God; and without grace, our praises are but hollowings, our prayers but howlings, as the scripture terms them; *They have not cried to me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds, Hos. 7. 14.* How can there be an exer-

cise of that which is not? The skill of the musician cannot discover itself, till the instrument be made tunable. The heart must be strung with grace by the Spirit, before that Spirit can touch the strings, to make harmony to God in gospel-service. Our tempers must be changed, our hearts fitted, before we can make melody to God. The principal beauty and glory of a duty, lies in the internal workings of the heart; and how can that heart work graciously, that hath nothing of God and his grace in it? It is said, *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child*, *Prov. 22. 15.* So is corruption like poison bound up in the heart of a man. It is entered into the very composition of us.

A *law of sin* is predominant in a natural man, *Rom. 7. 23*, which influences all his actions and services; for he hath no other law in his mind, to check the motions of it and to scent his duties, whereby they may carry a pleasing savour to God. The gift of prophecy, the understanding of mysteries, the depth of knowledge, the removing mountains, bestowing alms, dying for religion, are brave and noble acts; but without *charity*, love to God, without which no other grace can work, all these profit *nothing*, *1 Cor. 13. 2, 3.* There is a moral goodness in feeding the poor; but no gracious goodness without charity. A little of this, would make those as a diamond doth gold, wherein it is set, more valuable. If all those profit nothing without this grace of charity, they would profit much with it. How does grace alter the very nature of services? Those acts which are sensitive in a brute, were he transformed into a man, and endued with reason, would become rational. Those actions which are but moral in a mere man, when changed into christian, become evangelical; they would be of another nature, and another value.

Well then, look after the new birth, since it is so necessary. There cannot be gracious practices, without gracious principles. Can any thing fly to heaven without wings? We are to walk as Christ walked :

how can we do it without a principle akin to that which Christ had? We are bound to act from a principle of righteousness. Adam was, and his posterity are; and should we not look after that which is so necessary a perfection, requisite for our services? No doubt but the devil could find matter enough for prayer, and from the excellency of his knowledge, frame rare strains, as some word it; but would it be a service which came from such a nature? As long as we are allied to him in our nature, our services will be of as little value. He transforms himself into *an angel of light*, but is still a devil; and many men do so in their religious acts, yet still remain unregenerate.

4. We cannot perform spiritual services *freely* and *voluntarily*, because we are at enmity. A natural man's services are forced, not free. The aversion of our natures from God, is as strong as their inclination to evil. We have no fervent desires to love God; and therefore no desires to do any thing out of affection to him. When sensual habits are planted in the soul, there is an enmity to God in the mind; *It will not be subject to the law of God*; and whilst that habit sways, it cannot. This inclination to sin, and consequently aversion to good, is incorporated in nature, like blackness in a negro, or spots in a *leopard*; they are *accustomed to sin, and cannot* do good. There is no agreeableness between God and man's soul, whilst there is a friendship between the heart and sin; he affects the one, and is disgusted with the other; one is his pleasure, the other his trouble. He has no will, no heart to come to God in any service; and when he does, he is rather dragged, than sweetly drawn. The things of God are against the bent of a natural heart; there is nothing so irksome as the most spiritual service. When men engage in them, they row against the stream of nature itself.

There must therefore be something of a contrary efficacy to overpower this violent tide; a law of grace to renew the mind, and turn the motions of the

will to another channel. Restraining grace may for a while stop the current, but not turn and change the natural course. A carnal mind conceits the things of God, and his spiritual service, to be *foolishness*; and therefore contemns them, 1 *Cor.* 1. 23, 24.

The eye of the mind must be opened to discern the wisdom of God in them, before he can affect them. The heart should be lifted up in the evangelical ways of God. Can mere flesh be thus? Force can never change nature. You may hurl lead up into the air, but it will never ascend of itself, while it is lead, unless it be rarified into air or fire. Keep up iron many years in the air, by the force of a load-stone, it will retain its tendency to fall to the earth, if the obstacle be removed; the natural gravity is suspended, not altered.

Till the nature of the will be altered, it can never move freely to any duty. There must be a power to will, before there is a will to do; *It is God which works in you both to will and to do, Phil.* 2. 13. A supernatural renewing grace must expel corrupt habits from the will, and reduce it to its true object. When faith is planted, it brings love to work by; when the soul is renewed, there is an harmony between God and the heart, between the mind and the word, between the will and the duty; when the appetite, and true taste of the soul, is restored in regeneration, then spring up strong desires to apply itself to every holy service; *The sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet.* 2. 2, 3, is fervently *desired*, after it is spiritually *tasted*.

Well then, there must be a change in us, or in the law. *The law is spiritual, man is carnal, Rom.* 7. 14. The law can have no friendship for man, nor man no friendship for the law in this state, since their natures are so contrary. What the law commands, is disgusting to the flesh; what the flesh desires, is displeasing to the law. There must then be a change; the law must become carnal, or man become spiri-

tual, before any agreement can be between them. Where do you think this change must light? It can never be in the law, therefore it must be in man. The wound in our wills must be cured; the tide of nature, that never carries us to God, must be turned and altered by a stream of grace to move us to him and his service. Man hath been a slave to his lust by the loss of grace, and is never like to be restored to his liberty in the service of God till he be repossessed of that grace, the loss of which brought him into slavery. The gospel is a *law of liberty*. A servile spirit does not suit a free law, neither is it a fit frame for an evangelical service.

5. Unregenerate men cannot perform religious duties with *delight*, because we are alienated. This we are to do. Paul *delighted in the law of God*; and the law was the delight of David: his whole pleasure run in this channel. Now because of that aversion to God, there is no will and freedom in his service; much less can there be a delight. A corrupt nature can have no divine strains; a diseased man has no delight in his own acts; his distemper makes his very motion unpleasant to him. Things that are not natural, can never be delightful. There is a mighty distance between spiritual duties and a carnal heart. Things out of their place can never be at rest. Sin is as much a natural man's element, as water to a fish, or air to a bird. If he be stopped in the ways of the flesh, he is restless till he return. He may indeed have some delight sometimes in a service; not as it respects God as the object, or God as the end: there is no such friendship in a natural man's heart to him: but as there is an agreement between a service and some carnal end he performs it for. His delight is not terminated in the service, but in self-love, self-interest, or some external reward; anchored in it by some hopes of carnal advantage; not springing from a living love, or a gracious affection to God. He hath no knowledge of God; and therefore can

have no delight in God, or in his service. It is impossible we can come before God in his worship without pleasure and delight, if we know how amiable he is in his person, and how gracious in his nature: but we naturally think God a hard master. And man having no delight in God, he can have none in those means which lead him to God, and as they are appointed to bring God and his soul together. He hath wrong notions of duties, looks upon them as drudgeries, not as advantages. *Ye said, behold, what a weariness it is, &c. Mal. 1. 13.* Without a change of nature, we cannot desire communion with God; and therefore cannot delight in the means of it. We can no more do any service cheerfully, than the saints without it, could receive *joyfully the spoiling of their goods*; we can never be in a holy extasy, without this inward principle, to make the gospel-services connatural to us. This only makes high impressions upon the soul. It is the law within our hearts, which only makes us delight to do his will.

Thy law is within my heart, says Jesus, *Psal. 40. 8.* He had a natural affection to it, and then a high delight in it. It made our Saviour delight to do his work; and it was the *inward man of the heart*, wherein the apostle's delight in the law was placed. Unless we have a divine impression of God upon us, we cannot hear his word with any joy in it; as our Saviour saith, *Ye therefore hear them not*: that is, the words of God, *because ye are not of God, John 8. 47.* Unless we have God's *light and his truth* sent forth into us, we can never make God our *exceeding joy*, or go to his *altar* with such a frame, *Psal. 43. 3, 4.* Then there is a necessity of the new nature, to have a warm frame of heart in evangelical duties. What is connatural to us, is only delightful. So much of weariness and bondage we have in any holy service, so much of a legal frame; so much of love and delight, so much we have of a new covenant grace. A spirit of adoption, and regenera-

tion only can make us delight to come to our Father, and to cry Abba to him.

6. Without regeneration, we cannot perform evangelical duties *sincerely*, because *we are a lie, and in our best estate vanity*. We must *worship God in truth*, as well as *spirit*. God is a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit. God is truth, and therefore must be worshipped in truth, *John 4. 24*. Without a new nature we cannot worship God in truth. The old nature is in itself a lie, a mere falsity, something contrary to that nature God created. It was first introduced by a lie of the devil, *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil, Gen. 3. 5*; and thereupon a fancy that God lied in his command. How can we serve God with this nature, which had nothing but a lie for its foundation; a lie of the devil, a lie in our fancy? Therefore our old nature is no better than a lie. How can we serve God with that nature which is quite another thing to that of his framing? Man in his fall is a liar. *Let God be true, and every man a liar, Rom. 3. 4*; a covenant-breaker, that kept not his faith with God. God, in respect of truth, and man in respect of lying, are set in opposition by the apostle there. No man, but would slight and scorn that service from another, which he knew to be a lying service in the very frame of it. There is no truth can be in any service which is founded only upon an old nature, and performed by one that is acted by the father of lies: and so is every unregenerate man, every *child of disobedience, Eph. 2. 2*.

Now *sincerity* cannot be without a new nature, because there are no *divine motives* which should sway the soul. Most services of natural men have such dirty springs, so unsuitable to that railed temper men should have in dealing with God, that they produce sacrifices not fit to be offered to an earthly governor. *If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil, &c. offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee? Mal. 1. 8*. Had they had divine

motives, they had never brought such sickly services. What was not fit for themselves, they thought fit for God. Did but princes know what motives many had in their services, they would with as much scorn reject them, as they do ignorantly receive them with affection. But it is otherwise with God, who knows all the springs and wards in that lock of the heart of his own framing. Do not most services take their rise from custom, or from an outward religious education barely; or at best, from natural conscience; which though it be all in a man, which takes God's part, yet it is flesh, and defiled? And what pure vapours can be expected from a lake of Sodom? *To them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled, Tit. 1. 15.*

The mind, which is the repository of natural light; and the conscience, which is the advocate of natural light, and applies it upon particular occasions, are defiled, and that in every unbelieving person. Can the motives which conscience takes from a dark and defiled principle, as the mind is, be divine? It is fear of death, wrath, and judgment, which it mostly applies. These are the motives of defilement. Fear is the natural consequence of pollution: without sin and corruption, we never had had any fear of hell. That cannot be gracious, which springs naturally from the commission of sin; and can this be divine? Were there no punishment feared, there should be no duty performed. Conscience hath naturally no basis to stand upon but this. What is the principle of his fear? Self. It is not therefore obedience to God, but self-preservation sways a man. Fear is but a servile disposition; and therefore cannot make a service good. All such extrinsic motives, which arise not from a new life, are no more divine, than the weights of a clock may be said to have life, because they set the wheels on running.

The same action may be done by several persons,

upon different principles and motives ; for which, one may be rewarded, the other not ; *He that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward ; and whosoever shall give unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward, Matt. 10. 41, 42.* One may receive a member of Christ, out of respect to Christ, and the relation the person hath to him. Another may receive the same person out of a common principle of humanity ; the action is the same ; the good redounding to the object, is the same : nay, it may be greater in him that acts from a commiseration of him as a man, than a cup of cold water from the other, because his ability is greater ; but the inward respect to the object is different. One respects him as a man of the same nature with himself in misery ; the other respects him as a member of Christ in misery. One respects him as a man, the other as a righteous man. The principle is different ; one relieves him out of a natural compassion, common to a heathen with him ; the other out of a christian-affection to his Head.

The actions are therefore different, because of their motives : one is rewardable, and promised to be rewarded ; the other not : one may be from *grace*, the other from *nature*. I do not say it always is, unless there be a constant tenor of such motives in our actions : for a natural man, under the preaching of the gospel, may do such a thing out of a present and transient respect to Christ, whom he hears so often of, and hath some presumption to be saved by ; but it is not his constant frame.

Therefore from hence results a necessity of the alteration of the frame of our souls, to furnish us with divine and heavenly motives for our actions. A man may do a thing by nature, from a good principle, a principle of common honesty, good in its kind, but not evangelically good, without a renewed affection to God ; *If you love me, keep my command-*

ments, *John* 14. 15. Keep what I command you, out of affection to me. Where the *imagination of the heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually, Gen.* 6. 5, all the service a man in that state performs, rises from this spring, and has some infectious imagination in it, highly abominable to God; either wrong notions of God, in it, or wrong notions of the duty, or corrupt motives, something or other of the evil imagination of the heart, mixes itself with it.

Without a renewed nature, as there are no divine motives, so there can be no *divine ends*. We are bound to refer our natural actions, much more our religious services, to the glory of God. The end is the moral principle of every action. It is that which confers goodness or badness upon the service; *If the eye be evil, the whole body is full of darkness, Luke* 11. 34. This is commonly understood of a man's aim. If the intention be evil, there is nothing but darkness in the whole service. The perfection of every thing consists in answering the end for which it was framed: that which was the first end of our framing, ought to be the end of our acting; viz. the glory of God. But man has taken himself off from this end, and has been fond of making himself his chief good and ultimate end. Men naturally have corrupt ends in good duties. Pride is the cause of some men's virtue: and they are spiritually vicious, in avoiding crimes, because they intrench too much upon their reputation.

The Pharisees made their devotion contribute to their ambition; *They pray to be seen of men, Mat.* 6. 5. *But all their works they do to be seen of men, Matt.* 23. 5. There was not one work wherein they had not respect to this. Their works might well be called the works of the devil, whose main business it was to set up pride and self. All their pretences of devotion to God, were but the adoration of some golden image. Have not many in their more splendid actions, the same end with brutes, the satisfaction of

the sensitive part, covetousness, pride, emulation, sense of honour, qualities perceivable in the very brutes, as the end of some of their actions? The acting for a sensitive end, is not suitable to a rational, much less can it be the end of a gracious creature. Have not men sinful ends in their religious services? In their prayers to God, in their acknowledgments of God? The devil could intreat our Saviour's leave to go into the herd of swine. Was this a prayer, though directed to Christ, when his end was to destroy, and satisfy his malice in it? At best, a man without grace is like a picture in a room, which eyes all, and hath no more respect to a prince, than his attendants.

A natural man's respect to God, is but equal to a respect to all his other worldly concerns. Indeed it were well if it were so. He parcels out one part for God, one part for himself, and one part for the world; but God has the least share; or at best, no more than the rest. And truly as a picture cannot give a greater respect, to fix its eyes more upon a prince than a peasant, because it has no life; so neither can a natural man pay a supreme respect to God in his service, without a spiritual life. There is a necessity then of removing those depaved ends, that man may answer the true end of his creation. The principles then upon which such ends do grow, contrary to the will of God, must be rooted out, that the soul may move purely to God in every service.

We are all come short of the glory of God; *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: Rom. 3. 23*; short of aiming at it, short of his approbation of our acts. Being thus come short, our ends cannot rise higher than the frame of our soul. Grace, grace only, can advance our wills to those supernatural ends for which they were first framed. We can never aim at the glory of God, till we have an affection to him: we can never honour him supremely, whom we do not supremely love. An affection to God can never

be had, till the nature wherein the aversion is placed, be changed into another frame. We are to glorify God, as God: how can we do this, without the knowledge of him? How can we know him, but by the gospel, wherein he discovers himself? How can we have right conceptions of the gospel, till gospel-impressions be made upon us? How can we act for the glory of God, to whom naturally we are enemies? There is none of us born with a spiritual love to God.

There must then be an alteration of the end and aim in us; our actions cannot else be good, though ordered by God himself. God employs Satan in some things; as in afflicting Job. But is his performance good? No, because his end is not the same with God's. He acts out of malice, what God commands out of sovereignty and for gracious designs. Our end without it, is not the same with the end of the action: for moral acts tend to God's glory, though the agent has no such intention. So the action may be good in itself, but not good in the actor because he wants a due end. It follows then, that those actions only can be said to be evangelical, when the great end of God's glory, which was his end both in creation and redemption, hath a moral influence upon every service; when we have the same end in our redeemed services, as God had in his redeeming love.

7. We cannot without regeneration perform gospel-duties *humbly*, because of natural stoutness and hardness. Evangelical duties must be performed with humility. Self-denial is the chief gospel lesson, and is to run through the veins of every service. Therefore God speaks of giving a heart of flesh, in gospel-times; *I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances and do them, Ezek. 11. 19.* Gospel duties require a pliability and tenderness of heart. Adam's over-valuing himself,

and swelling with designs of being like God, brought an incapacity upon himself of serving his Creator. And man ever since, is too much aspiring, and too well opinioned of himself, to perform duties in an evangelical strain, with that meltingness, that nothingness in himself, which the gospel requires. Our swelling and admiring thoughts of our own natural righteousness, hinders Christ from saving us, and ourselves from serving him.

There must then be an humble, and melting, and self-denying frame. The angels are said to cover their faces before God, as having nothing to glory in of their own. And the chief design of the gospel, is to beat down all glorifying in ourselves. *That no flesh should glory in his presence; let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. 1. 29, 31.* And indeed it humbles us no more, than what upon due consideration will appear very necessary. Nature then must be changed, before this pride be rooted out: old things must pass away, that God may be all in all in the creature. We cannot without a new nature, make a true estimate of ourselves, and lie as vile and base in the presence of God. A stone, with all the hammering, cannot be made soft. Beat it into several pieces; you may sever the continuity of its parts, but not master its hardness; every little piece of it will retain the hardness of its nature. So it is with a heart of stone: the nature must be changed, before it be fit for those services which require melting, humble, and admiring frames. There is a necessity of a residing grace, like fire, to keep the soul in a melting temper.

8. Without a new nature, we cannot perform gospel services *constantly*, because of our natural levity. Where the nature is flesh, the heart *minds the things of the flesh, Rom. 8. 5.* The mind thus habituated, will not be long employed about the things of the spirit. There is a natural levity in man's nature. Do not many seem to begin in the Spirit, and end in

the flesh? Seem to arise to heaven, and quickly fall down to earth? Do not our very promises vanish with the next wind of temptation; and like sparks, expire as soon as they be born, unless grace be in the heart to keep them alive? The Israelites are accused of not having a heart steadfast with God. *Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant, Psal. 78. 37.* Are our natures better than theirs? Do we not all lie under the same charge; so uncertain naturally, about divine things, as if there were nothing but wind in our composition? Nothing can be kept up in motion against its nature, but by force. A top hath no inward principle of motion, but is moved by some outward force; when that is removed, the motion languisheth. Any motion that depends only upon outward wires, expires upon the breaking of them. When external motives, which spurred men on to this or that service, cease, the service dies of course, because the spring of the motion falls.

If the fear of hell, the terrors of death, or some pressing calamity, be the spring of any duty; when these are removed, there will be no more regard to the duty they engendered. But what is natural, is constant, because the spring always remains. Interest changes, conscience is various; and therefore the operations arising from thence, will partake of the uncertainty of them. Stony ground may bring forth blades; but for want of roots they will quickly wither. A man may mount high in religion, by the mixture of some religious passion, as meteors in the air; but by reason of the gross and earthly parts in them, will not continue their station. There is no being *without* stable, but God; and no principle stable *within*, but grace; *It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, Heb. 13. 9.* Whatsoever service is undertaken upon changeable motives, is as changeable as the ground upon which it stands. If credit, slavish fear of God, worldly interest, inspire us with some seeming holy re-

solutions, they will all fly away upon the first removal of those props.

There is therefore a necessity of a change of nature and disposition. Where there is no approbation of things that are excellent, there can be no constant operation about them. All action about an object, continues according to the affection to it and delight in it. We shall then be filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God, when we have a sincere approbation of the excellency of them; first, *approve things that are excellent*; and then follows, *without offence, till the day of Christ*, *Phil.* 1. 10, 11. A stately profession can no more hold out against the floods of temptation, than a beautiful building can stand against the wind without a good foundation under ground. It is only the Spirit of the Lord within, as well as without, that can maintain the standard against temptation, *Isa.* 59. 19.

Upon the whole then, there is a necessity of regeneration for the performance of gospel duties. We cannot else perform them spiritually, because we are flesh; nor vitally, because we are dead; nor graciously, because we are corrupt; nor voluntarily, because we are at enmity; nor delightfully, because we are alienated; nor sincerely, because we are falsity; nor humbly, because of our stoutness; nor constantly, because of our levity. Our natures must be changed in all these respects, before we can be fit for any gospel service.

PART IV.

REGENERATION NECESSARY FOR THE ENJOYMENT
OF GOSPEL PRIVILEGES.

The favour of God—No union with God in an unregenerate state—Regeneration necessary to justification—To adoption—To the acceptance of our services—To communion with God—To the communication of blessings from the fulness of Christ—To the improvement of ordinances—To the enjoyment of comfort—Without a renewed state of soul we cannot be in covenant with God.

II. **R**EGENERATION is necessary for *the enjoyment of gospel privileges*. 1. For the favour of God, and his complacency with us. We are not fit for God's delight without it. That person who has his love, must have his image. If ever God could love an old nature, which he once hated, and delight in that which he once loathed, he must divest himself of his immutability. He never hated the person of any of his creatures, but for unrighteousness. And upon the removal of this cloud of separation between him and them, the beams of his love break out in their former vigour. God's love is not straitened, nor his kindness exhausted, no more than his hand is shortened, or his ear grown heavy, that he cannot hear; *But your iniquities have separated between you and your*

God: and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear, Isa. 59. 1, 2.

What made the *first separation*? Was it not sin? God told Adam before, what the issue would be, upon his eating the forbidden fruit; *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die, Gen. 2. 17.* It is not a temporal death there only meant; for he should then have died that day wherein he fell; the word *surely* importing so much. And the punishment of a temporal death was pronounced afterwards; *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, Gen. 3. 19.* Thou shalt surely die; thy integrity and righteousness will expire that very moment, and thou shalt die in my just displeasure. It is a spiritual death that is most properly meant. The punishment of sin, is death. The chief part of this death is an *alienation from the life of God*: that is, not to have God, and the righteousness of God's image, living in him; but to be impure, corrupt, a hater of God, and a servant of sin, *Eph, 4. 18.* Now from this punishment no man can be freed, but by a contrary regeneration; the proper effect whereof, is to love God, to know his name, to partake of his holiness, to imitate his virtues.* Man forfeited all God's favour upon his fall, and can challenge nothing of it.

What then can restore man to God's favour? Can that which first deprived us of it? The cause of our destruction can never be the means of our restoration. Did the loss of Adam's integrity make him unfit for paradise, the garden of God, from whence he was expelled, as a token of God's disfavour? And can the continuance of that loss, be a means to regain that love which banished us? It was a spiritual death. And is the carcase of a soul fit for God's complacency? There must be not only a satisfaction to his justice for the re-instating man into his favour, but a restoring of his image, by the Holy Ghost. It

* Cocceius more Novoeh. p. 65.

is as impossible the soul can be beautiful without life, and without holiness, as for a body to be beautiful without a good colour, and proportion of parts. Take away this, beauty must cease, and deformity succeed in the place. It is impossible therefore, that where sin remains in its full vigour, where there is nothing of an original integrity residing, but that the soul must be monstrous, vile, and deformed in the eye of God.

To make it therefore a fit object for God's favour, it is necessary it be beautified with a holy nature, and adorned with its due proportions and vigour. The righteousness of Israel must go forth as brightness; he must be called by a new name; that is, a new nature: for what is a name without a nature? And then it should be *Hephzibah, the Lord delights in thee. The righteousness there of shall go forth as brightness, and the glory there of as a lamp that burns, Isa. 62. 1, 2, 3, 4.* Righteousness is the glory of a soul, as well as of a church. *Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. Thou shalt be called by a new name; a new nature wrought by the word of God; which the mouth of the Lord shall name.* Then she should be in favour with God; *a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God.* Righteousness is the glory of a soul, and God's delight and complacency is the consequent of a righteous nature.

The *elect themselves* have no interest in God's favour or delight, without regeneration. This follows upon the former. God cannot love the very top of mankind, his own choice, with a love of complacency, without regeneration, without a righteous nature. There is a favour of intention and purpose before it: there is also an executive love in the very infusing the habits of grace, which is a supernatural favour, because there is both a purpose, and then an actual conferring a supernatural good. God is free, and may will to give his gifts how, and to whom he pleases

But an elect person, whilst he continues in a state of nature, is not simply beloved, though there be a purpose of love; because there is no gracious quality in him, which is the object of God's special favour. It is regeneration only, which is the object of God's delight in us.

Hence it will follow, that *no privileges* under heaven, without it, can bring us into God's favour. No, not if any man were related to Christ according to the flesh. The apostle Paul would not think the better of himself for a fleshly relation to Christ, for being of the same country, descended of the Jewish nation; *Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,* 2 Cor. 5. 16. Though it be an honour to be of the same descent with Christ, according to the flesh; to be of the same nation and country; yet this does not make a man any more beloved of God. Nothing avails in Christ, but a new creature. And our Saviour himself pronounceth it so. It was the highest privilege to be the mother of our Saviour, according to the flesh; yet this had been nothing; without her being born again of the Spirit; *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Behold my mother and my brethren,* pointing to his disciples; *my mother, and my brethren, are those which hear the word of God, and do it,* Luke 8. 21. Those that hear the word, that have the gracious effect of the word wrought in them by the Spirit, are equal to my mother, and my brethren, and superior to any of my fleshly relations, if they be without it. There is a necessity of regeneration upon this account.

2. As there is no favour, so there is *no union with God* and Christ without it. Man hath some kind of natural union with all things in the world: he hath being with all creatures, rational faculties with angels, sense with animals, vegetation with plants. He wants only that with God, which would beautify all the rest. And this can only be by partaking of the

image of God's holiness by a new birth. There must be a capability for this union on man's part. A superior and inferior nature may be united together; but never contrary natures. There must be some proportion between the subjects to be united, which proportion consists in a commensuration of one thing to another. What proportion is there between God and our souls? There can be none without a supernatural grace, infusing a pure nature. As we come out of the quarry of nature rough and unpolished, we are not fit to be cemented with the corner-stone in the heavenly building; we must be first smoothed and altered by grace.

How can things be united to one another, which are already *united to their contraries*? Separation from one body, must make way for union to another. Naturally we are united to Satan, as the head of the wicked world. We are by nature his members. Our understandings and wills were united with his in Adam, when Adam gave up his understanding and will to him: And ever since he works in the *children of disobedience*. *Who now works in the children of disobedience.* Eph. 2. 2. * Working and working *in*, as an united nature to him, and principle in him. It is necessary this union should be broken, before we can partake of the influence of another head. The diabolical nature and principle therefore, which we have by sin, must be removed, and another nature, which is divine, must be restored before we can be united to Christ, and enjoy the benefits of union with him.

How can things of a *contrary nature* be united together? Can fire and water be united, a good angel and an impure devil? Can heaven and hell ever become friendly, and compose one body? We are united to the first Adam by a likeness of nature; how can we be united to the second, without a likeness to him from a new principle? We were united to the

* ἐνίργεντος ἐν ἡοῖς.

first by a living soul ; we must be united to the other by a quickning spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam, without *bearing an heavenly image*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 48, 49. We are earthly as in the first Adam ; we must be heavenly to be in the second, because his nature is so. If we are his members, we must have the same nature which was communicated to him by the Spirit of God, which is holiness. This nature must flow from the same principle ; otherwise it is not the same nature. An old nature cannot be joined to a new Adam : there must be one spirit in both ; *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 17. And if it were an union barely of affections, as some would only make it, it is not conceivable how it can be, without a change of disposition. But since it is an union by indwelling of the same Spirit in both, it is less intelligible, how it can be without an assimilation of our nature to the nature of Christ. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, *Rom.* 8. 9. It can never be supposed, the Spirit should unite a pure head and impure members. Such an union would make our blessed Saviour like Nebuchadnezzar's image ; an head of gold, arms of silver, and feet of clay. Shall we loath to have impure things about us ? And will the holy Jesus endure a loathsome, putrifying soul to be joined to him ?

How can any thing be *vitally united to another, without life* ? It is a vital union, by virtue of which believers are called Christ ; *As all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 12. And it is compared to the union of the members of a natural body, *Rom.* 12. 4, 5. Members have not only life in their head, but in themselves, because the soul, which is the life of the body, is not only in the head, but in all parts of the body, and exercises in every part its vital operations. The Spirit therefore, which is the bond of this union, communicates life to every member wherein he resides, as well

as in the head. What man would endure to be joined to a dead body, though it were one he ever so dearly loved? If a man were united to Christ, without regeneration, Christ's body would be partly alive, partly dead, if any one member of it had not a spiritual life. A dead body and a living head; a member of Christ, with a nature contrary to him, is an inconceivable paradox. Did God ever design such a monstrous union for his Son? From hence results the necessity of regeneration; for without it, there can be no union with Christ.

3. There can be no *justification* without it. We are not justified by an inherent righteousness; yet we are not justified without it. We cannot be justified by it, because it is not commensurate to the law, by reason of its imperfection; we cannot be justified without it; for it is not congruous to the wisdom and holiness of God, to count a person righteous, who hath nothing of righteousness in him, and whose nature is as corrupt as the worst of men. With what respect to God's honour can it be expected, that God should pardon that man's sins, whose will is not changed, who still hath the same habitualness in his will to commit sin, though he does not at present act it. It is very congruous in a moral way, that the person offending should retract his sin, and return to his former affection. There is a distinction between justification and regeneration, though they never are asunder. Justification is relative; regeneration internally real. Union with Christ is the ground of both; Christ is the meritorious cause of both. The Father pronounces the one, the Spirit works the other; it is the Father's sentence, and the Spirit's work. The relative and the real change, are both at the same time; *But you are sanctified, but you are justified*, 1 Cor. 6. 7; both go together. We are not justified before faith, because we are justified by it, Rom. 5. 1. And faith is the vital principle whereby we live; *The life which I now live, I live by the faith*

of the Son of God, Gal. 2. 20. It is the root-grace, and contains the seeds of all other graces in it; it is habitually, and seminally, all other grace.

So that unless we be new born, no justification can be expected; no justification can be evidenced. God never pardons sin, but he subdues iniquity; *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity? He will subdue our iniquities, Micah 7. 18, 19.* The conquest cannot be made, while the nature, the root of the rebellion, remains. When he turns his compassion to us, he will turn away our hearts from iniquity. If a man were justified before he were regenerate, then he were righteous before he was alive; *Being in Christ, as free from condemnation,* is always attended with a *walking after the Spirit*; and walking is not before living. Pardon would be unprofitable, unless he that were pardoned, were made righteous inchoatively here, and had a right to, and hope of, a perfect righteousness hereafter. If righteousness were not imparted in this manner, it would be an argument a man were still under the law; which saith, *He that doth them shall live in them,* which is impossible in a man that hath once sinned, though his sins are remitted. But it is clear, that righteousness is imparted, since there is no man in the world, whose sins are pardoned, but finds some principle in him, whereby he is enabled to contest with sin, more than before he was. Therefore do not deceive yourselves; there is no pardon without a righteous nature, though pardon be not given for it.

4. There is no *adoption* without regeneration. We can no more be God's sons, without spiritual regeneration, than we can be the sons and daughters of men, without natural generation. Adoption is not a mere relation, without an inward form. The privilege, and the image of the sons of God, go both together. A state of adoption, is never without separation from defilement; *Come you out from among them, be you separate, and I will be a father unto you, and you shall*

be my sons and daughters, 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18. The new name in adoption is never given, till the new creature is framed. *As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God*, Rom. 8. 14. *υιοι*, those very persons; that is the signal mark, that they are led by the Spirit; therefore first enlivened by the Spirit. A child-like relation is never without a child-like nature. The same method God observes in declaring the members his sons, as he did in declaring the head his Son, which was *according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*. So he declares believers to be his sons, by giving them a spirit of holiness, and by a resurrection from sin and spiritual death. The devils may as well be adopted sons of God, as we, without a change of nature. To be the sons of the living God, was the great promise of the gospel prophesied of; *Ye are the sons of the living God*, Hos. 1. 10. How well will it suit, a living God and a dead son? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Our Saviour's argument from the immortality of the soul will evidence not only a resurrection, but a necessity of a spiritual life. What advantage is there in being the sons of the living God, if we had no more life in us, than his greatest enemies? Regeneration, as a physical act, gives us a likeness to God in our nature; adoption, as a legal act, gives us a right to an inheritance; both the great intendments of the gospel, both accompanying one another. No sonship without a new nature.

5. There is no *acceptation of our services* without regeneration. We are not fit to perform any duty without it; and God will never accept any duty from us without it. In the first of Ephesians, 1. Election, 2. Regeneration, expressed by being holy; 3. Adoption, 4. Acceptation, are linked together; *He hath chosen us, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children: after follows, grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*, ver. 4, 5, 6.

Our acceptation is only upon the account of Christ ; but the acceptability is upon the account of grace. Faith makes our persons and our duties acceptable ; and Christ makes them both accepted. Acceptability ariseth from grace, as damnability ariseth from sin. God damns none, unless they be damnable ; neither doth God accept any in Christ, unless they be acceptable. * The papists, that plead for merit, acknowledge nothing of it before grace, but after grace, because then the services have a greater proportion to God, from the dignity of the person, they being acts of God's children, and wrought by his spirit. God can love nothing but himself, and what he finds of himself in the creature. All services, without something of God's image and Spirit in them, are nothing. As the product of a million of cyphers, though you still add to them, signifies nothing : but add one figure, an unit, the spirit, grace, it will make the product to be many millions of high account with God. All the significancy depends upon the figure, which if absent, the rest would be nothing.

All moral perfections, without a new nature, are but cyphers in God's account ; *Without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11. 6.* Grace is only a good work ; *He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it till the day of Christ, Phil. 1. 6.* Intimating, that their morality, and their natural wisdom, before their regeneration, were not good works in the sight of God. They were good in their kind ; as a crab may be said to be a good crab, but not a good pippin. It is not good, unless it be fruit brought forth in Christ ; neither is it ordained as good to the day of Christ, to appear glorious at the time of his triumph. God looks into our services, whether the Spirit frames them, and Christ presents them ; all that we do, must go through their hands, before they can reach God's heart. Acceptation can never be without a renewed nature. *They that are in the flesh*

* Lessius de Perfect. Divin. p. 56.

cannot please God, Rom. 8. 8. Their persons cannot, therefore their actions cannot, because they are the products of a nature at variance with him; a nature that is not, nor cannot be subject to his law. So that God must be displeased with his own spiritual law; yea, with his own holy nature, and change his judgment, and change his nature, before he can be pleased with fleshly services; for at the best, they are but refined brutishness. The image of the devil can never be grateful to God.

Services flowing from nature, may seem in the outward form of them, to be acceptable as the duties of a good man; but considering what a sink of impurity the heart is, from whence they proceed, they cannot be so. Good water is sweetest, and bad water most corrupt nearest the spring or fountain; although the streams may lose some of their corruption in their passage. A gracious man's duties are most pleasant to God, nearest the heart: a natural man's services are most distasteful, nearest the spring. When the heart is a good treasure, what comes from it, is regarded as a rich gift, because it comes from a valuable treasure. *Luke 6. 43.* Hence it is, that a less work, coming from a pure and holy principle in a renewed man, is more acceptable to God, than a greater work in respect of the external glorification of him in the good of mankind, coming from an impure principle in a natural man. As a cup of cold water given to a disciple, is more valuable than the gift of a prince, from another principle. In the one, God sees a conformity of affection with his holiness; in the other, only a conformity with his providence. One intends God's glory, and the other only acts it, proposing some other end to himself. And we use to value gifts, rather by the affection of the friend, than the quantity of the gift. Well then, consider it; without a new nature, all our services, though they should amount to many millions in number, have no intrinsic value in them with God. For where the

nature is displeasing, the actions flowing from that nature, can never please him. *He that turns away his ear from hearing the law*; that is, from a spiritual obedience to the law, *even his prayer is an abomination, Prov. 28. 9.* It is formed by a noisome soul.

6. There is no *communion with God*, without a renewed soul. God is incapable on his part, with the honour of his law and holiness, to have communion with such a creature. Man is incapable on his part, because of the aversion rooted in his nature. What way can there be to bring God and man together, without this change of nature? What communion can there be between a living God and a dead heart? God loathes sin, man loves it; God loves holiness, man loathes it. How can these contrary affections meet together in an amicable friendship? What communion with so much disagreement in affections? In all friendship there must be similitude of disposition. Justification cannot bring us into communion with God, without regeneration. It may free us from punishment, discharge our sins; but not prepare us for a converse, wherein our chief happiness lies. There must be some agreement before there can be a communion. Beasts and men agree not in a life of reason; and therefore cannot converse together. God and man agree not in a life of holiness; and therefore can have no communion together. We are by sin, alienated from the life of God; and therefore from his fellowship, *Eph. 4. 18.* We must have his life restored to us, before we can be instated in communion with him.

God can have no pleasure in such communion. God took a delight in the creation, and rejoiced in his work. Sin despoiled God of his rest. It can give God no content, no satisfaction: for to be in the flesh, is to be in that nature which was derived from Adam; which brought the displeasure of God upon all mankind. Regeneration by the Spirit, restores the creature to such a state, wherein God may take

pleasure in him ; and strips him by degrees of that sin which spoiled his delight in the work of his hands ; as it grows, communion is enlarged. God made man at first after his own image, that he might have communion with him. Since the loss of that, what fitness can there be for communion, till the restoration of that which God thought fit for his delight ?

Suppose that some one work of a natural man, may be good and pleasing to God, it will not argue a communion of God with the person : he may be pleased with the work, but not with the man ; for all the goodness he hath, being in the act, and the act being transient, when that is past, his goodness is as the morning dew, vanished. He cannot be the object of God's delight, because he has no habitual goodness in him. If a man be abominable, and impure naturally, he cannot have converse with God, without a nature suitable to God, and a nature so animated, as that God may put some trust in it, and not be at uncertainty. *What is man, that he should be clean ; he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous ? Behold, he puts no trust in his saints, &c. Job 15. 14, 15, 16.* No man is clean, but those that delight in sin are much more abominable ; *that drink up iniquity like water.* Now God being infinitely holy, can have no communion with that which he abominates ; and he cannot have a fixed, and a delightful communion with that which he cannot confide in. It must be therefore such a nature as is produced, and preserved by his own Spirit. If the heavens are not clean in his sight, we must have a nature purer and cleaner than the heavens, before God can delightfully behold us, and pleasingly converse with us.

As God can have no pleasure in such communion, so *man* is contrary to it. Man, as he is by corruption, is at variance with God, and cannot but be at variance with him. An uncircumcised heart will not love God ; or at least, will not pay him such a proportion of love, and love of such a quality, as is due to him.

For if the end of the circumcision of the heart, be to love the Lord with all our hearts; *And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, Deut. 30. 6*; then it will necessarily infer, that he whose heart is not circumcised, does not love God with all his heart. Holiness and iniquity are so contrary, that no agreement can be made between them. God must deny his nature, before he can deny his hatred to sin; and man must be stripped of his nature, before he can leave his affection to sin. It is equally impossible for wickedness to love holiness, and for purity to love pollution: *There can be no fellowship with God, whilst we walk in darkness, and he is light, 1 John 1. 6, 7.*

Nay further, man naturally *resists all means* of communion with God. It is the Spirit only which is the band of union, and consequently the cause of communion; the Spirit can only bring God and us together. *Walking in the spirit* hinders us from *fulfilling the lusts of the flesh*, which make us incapable of communion. *Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, Gal. 5. 16.* But every man by nature, as well as the Jews, *resists the Holy Ghost, Acts 7. 51.* And while this resistance of the great medium of it remains, this communion can never be: this resistance therefore must be removed, and there must be a divine stamp and impression upon our very nature, to make it pliable. You see more and more the necessity of regeneration.

7. As there is no communion with God without it, so no *communications of Christ* to our souls, can be relished and improved without it. All the communications of Christ relish of that fulness of grace which was in his person; and therefore cannot be relished by any principle, but that of the same nature. Whenever Jesus Christ comes to bless us with the great blessings of his purchase, he *turns away our hearts from iniquity, Acts 3. 26.*

Without this, *ordinances cannot be improved.* The

word hath no place in them, John 8. 37. There is no footing naturally for any divine and spiritual truth. The nature of the soil must be changed, before this heavenly plant will thrive, Plants grow not upon stones, nor this heavenly plant in a stony heart. The vine and the weed draw the same moisture of the earth, which in the vine is transmuted by the nature of the plant, into a nobler substance than that in the weed. The new nature of a good man, turns the juice of the word into a nobler spirit in him: and according as the nature of a good man is enriched with grace, the more does he digest the word, and improve it, to the bringing forth of fruit, and fruit of a diviner nature, than another: the juice it affords to all, is the same; but the nature of the creature turns it in the concoction. Nature must be changed then, to make any profitable improvement of the word, and other institutions. A stone receives water upon it, not into it: it falls off, or dries up, as soon as ever it falls. But a new heart, a heart of flesh, sucks in the dew of the word, and grows thereby. The new birth and nature makes us suck in *the milk, and grow thereby, 1 Pet. 2. 2.*

There can be no communication of comfort without regeneration. The Spirit comforts, by exciting grace, and by discovering grace, not by flashes and enthusiasm. What comfort can there be when grace, the foundation, is wanting? Can the Holy Ghost ever speak a lie, and give any man comfort, and tell him he is a child of God, when he hath the nature of the devil, so contrary to him? This were to witness, not *with our spirits*, but against the frame and habit of them, which is not the Spirit's work. Jesus Christ will not trifle away his comforts upon such as have no conformity to him. This were to put a jewel in a swine's snout, a crown upon a beast's head. Those that are not heirs by a new nature, to heaven, cannot claim any title to the first fruits and clusters of it, the comforts of the gospel. As there is a ne-

cessity of a likeness to Christ, to make us capable of communications from him in a state of glory ; so it is as certainly necessary, to the lower degrees of it in this world. Vessels of wrath must be changed into vessels of honour, before they are capable of being filled with spiritual comforts. Our blessed Saviour keeps his choicest showers, and richest beams, for his dressed garden, not for the wild desert.

8. Unrenewed in nature we cannot be in *covenant* with God. This should have been first, as the foundation of all. Had not Adam had an habitual righteousness in his nature, he had not been a fit person for God to have entered into covenant with. There must therefore be a restored righteousness, that we may come into the bond of the new covenant, for eternal life. The very terms of it are, *a new heart, a heart of flesh, a new spirit, the law written in the heart*. Without this new nature, we cannot depend on him by faith, which is the condition of the covenant. For we cannot confide in him to whom we have an enmity, and of whom we have a jealousy. We cannot have God to be our God, unless we be his people, have the nature and disposition of his people, turn to him, act towards him as our God ; whereas in our first defection, we made Satan our God. God requires righteousness still, to our being in covenant ; but dispenses with the strictness of the first covenant, and gives our Saviour a power to that end, in committing all judgment to the Son. As the covenant is spiritual, so there must be a spiritual life, to answer the terms of it : without it we cannot walk in the way wherein we engage by covenant to walk. Neither can we have any right to the promises and benefits of the covenant. Does God promise to be our God ? It is upon the condition we be his people. Does he promise never to leave us nor forsake us ? It is upon condition we continue not in our original apostacy. Does he promise to be present with us ? It is more than his holiness will endure, while we continue in our unsanctified nature.

PART V.

REGENERATION NECESSARY TO A STATE OF GLORY.

*The connection between a regenerate state and glory—
This connection is not meritorious—Necessary by the
decree of God—Meetness for heaven—The duties of
heaven—Attendance on God—Contemplation of God
—Love—Praise—The reward of heaven—Perfect
likeness to God—Fruition of God—Society of saints
—Inconceivable spiritual delights.*

I COME now to the second general division of the subject. As regeneration is necessary to a gospel-state, so it is necessary to a *state of glory*. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites, when they entered into Canaan.* Not a decrepid and infirm person, set foot in the promised land; none of those that came out of Egypt, with an Egyptian nature, and desires for the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering their old bondage, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness, only the two spies, who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage; but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Ca-

* Fuller Pisgah, book 4, chap. 36. 9. p. 45.

naan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the unholy; *That they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith that is in me, Acts 26. 18.* So our Saviour himself phrases it in his discourse to Paul, upon his conversion by faith, the great renewing principle.

Upon Adam's expulsion from Paradise, a flaming sword was set to stop his re-entry into that place of happiness. As Adam in his forlorn state, could not possess it, we also, by what we have received from Adam, cannot expect a greater privilegé than our head. Had Adam retained the righteousness of his nature, he had been fit for that place, and that place for him; but poor decrepid Adam could have no leave to enter. The priest under the law, could not enter into the sanctuary, till he were purified, nor the people into the congregation; neither can any man have access into the holy of holies, till that be consecrated for him by *the blood of Jesus*, and he *sprinkled* by the same blood for it, *Heb. 10. 19, 22.* It is by the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon our hearts, that we enter into the holiest by a way which he hath consecrated. *For there shall in no wise enter into it, anything that defileth, neither whatsoever works abomination, or a lie, Rev. 21. 17;* as every unclean thing was prohibited entrance into the temple.

Whosoever shall enter into the rest of God, must cease from his own works of darkness and corruption, as *God did from his works of creation, Heb. 4. 10.* If man fell the sixth day, the day of his creation, the rest of God in his lower works was disturbed by the entrance of sin upon them, as well as it had been disturbed by the sin of the angels in heaven. God rested from his works of creation, but not in them, but in Christ, the covenant of redemption, and restoration by him. We must therefore cease from our own works, to enter into his rest. This entrance we cannot have in an unbelieving, unregenerate state, because by unbelief we approve not of that for our

rest, wherein God settled his own repose; and by unregeneracy we oppose the great intendment of it, the restoration of the creature to be a fit object for God's rest and complacency. Regeneration is necessary to a state of glory.

1. Not that there is *a natural connexion* between a regenerate state and glory, that in its own nature *gives a right* to heaven; but a gracious connection by the will of God.* Though it be morally impossible in nature, that a man can have communion with God without a renewed state; yet when he hath a new nature, it is not absolutely necessary, that God should love him so intensely as to give him an eternal reward, but conditionally necessary, upon the account of the covenant, wherein God hath so promised. Though it be absolutely unavoidable to God, to love goodness, for because he is perfectly good he cannot hate it, yet it is not absolutely necessary he should instate it in so inconceivable a glory. A new nature indeed, makes a man capable of eternal glory, without which it is not possible for him to have it; but it gives him not a right to it, nor instates him in it, in its own nature, but by the gracious indulgence of God.

For as I have said before, in the general foundation of this doctrine, that God may give grace without glory, is intelligible: but how he can admit a man to glory without grace, is inconceivable. The very having of grace, is a reward in itself. It is an ennobling of our nature, a setting us in our right station (the purity of the body is a pleasure, though a man hath no hopes upon it, to be preferred to a better condition), which may appear to us, upon the banishment of Adam from paradise. Had there been any natural connection, he had not been dispossessed, supposing him to have faith infused into him at the time of the promulgation of the promise: or if afterwards, he would have had a re-entry, had there been

* Saurez. de grat. lib. 7. c. 1. numer. 12.

a natural connection between a new nature, and a state of glory.

2. Nor is there any *meritorious* connection between a regenerate state and glory; because there is no exact proportion between a new nature and eternal glory. The papists say, that before habitual grace, a man cannot merit: but after it is infused by the Spirit of God into the soul, merit does result from the dignity of the person brought into a state of grace. No such thing. Glory indeed is merited; but the merit results, not from the new nature, but from the new head, our Lord Jesus Christ. That righteousness whereby God is engaged to give us a crown of glory for a garland of grace, is not a commutative justice: As if grace were of equal value to glory, and heaven no more than a due compensation; *There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, 2 Tim. 4. 8.* But it is the veracity and faithfulness of God, which is meant by righteousness there, and in other parts of scripture. It is a justice due to the promise, not to the nature of the grace; and due to the covenant made with Christ, which was, that he should have a seed to serve him. Upon which compact, our Saviour so peremptorily demands his people's being with him in glory; *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, John 17. 24.* As much as to say, "Father I will not remit a tittle of that article, which is part of the covenant between thee and me; I will have that performed to the full." And it is observable, though he mentions their faith, and their keeping his word, in other parts of the chapter, as arguments for God to take notice of them, and preserve them; yet his desire of the state of glory, he founds only upon his will, which must be grounded upon some antecedent agreement, whereby he had a right to plead for it. So that it is from the faithfulness of God to his promise and the full merit of Christ; and thereupon his

fixed resolution to have it performed ; not from any meritorious dignity in the new nature itself. Grace only fits for glory, but does not merit it.

3. It is necessary by a *fixed determination of God*. Supposing that God could in his own nature, congruously admit an unregenerate dead creature to a fruition of him in heaven ; yet since he hath decreed otherwise, and appointed other methods, God is now by his own free resolution, under an immutable necessity not to admit him. As God having by a determinate counsel, ordained the death of Christ, as the medium to redemption, could not in our apprehensions afterwards appoint another way, because his counsel had fixed not only upon the redemption of man, as the end, but the death of Christ as the means : and had there been a change, it must either be in the end, or in the means. If in the end, and he would not have man redeemed, there had been an alteration in his love and kindness. If in the means, it must be either a worse or a better means : if a worse, and not so fit to effect redemption, it had still implied a change in his kindness. If a better means, it would argue a defect of wisdom in his first choice, that he did not foresee the best. By the like counsel and wisdom, he has settled this of regeneration, as the way to glory : *Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, Heb. 12. 14.* Without a fixed and permanent holiness, which must be an holiness of nature, not only of action. Supposing any holiness in an action, without a new nature, it is yet but a transient holiness ; and though it may make the action acceptable to God, yet it can never make the person that did it acceptable to him.

4. Regeneration is necessary in a way of *aptitude and fitness* for this state. A fitness in both subjects is necessary to the enjoyment of one another. Since therefore our happiness consists in an eternal fruition of God ; and that naturally we are a mass of corruption ; there must be such a change, as to make an

agreement with that God, whom to enjoy is our happiness. For all aptitude is a certain connection of the two terms, whereby they may touch, and receive each other. We cannot enjoy God in his ordinances, without an holy nature, much less in heaven. As we are under the condemnation of the law, by reason of our guilt; so we are under an unfitness for heaven, by reason of our impurity. We have a remote natural capacity for it, as we are creatures endued with rational faculties. But we have a moral unfitness, while we want a divine impression to make us suitable to it.

Justification and adoption give us a right to the inheritance; but regeneration gives us a *meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, Col. 1. 12. We are not meet for it, while we are unholy and while we are darkness, because it is an inheritance of saints, and an inheritance in light. As the body cannot be made glorious, without a resurrection from a natural death; so neither can the soul, which is immortal, be made glorious, without a resurrection from a spiritual death. Our corruptible bodies cannot possess an incorruptible kingdom, unless made like to the glorious body of Christ; much less our souls, which are the chief subjects of communion with him in heaven. A depraved soul is as much unfit for a purified heaven, as a corruptible body is for an incorruptible glory. Our Saviour ascended not into heaven, to take possession of his glory, till after his resurrection from death; neither can we enter into heaven, but by a resurrection from sin. As Jesus Christ became like unto us, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest for us, *It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*, Heb. 2. 17; so it behoves us to be made like unto him, that we may be fit offerings in the hand of our high priest to present to God, for him to take pleasure in. The father of the prodigal forgave him at the first meeting, after his return:

but before he admitted him into the pleasure of his house, he took away his old garments, and put other robes upon him. God is said therefore, to work us to *this thing*, that we may be fit to be clothed upon with our heavenly house, 2 *Cor.* 5. 5.*

If God be happy in his nature, man cannot be happy in a nature contrary to him. For we can never expect to enjoy a felicity in such a nature, which if God himself had, he could never be happy in himself. It is holiness in God which fits him to fill heaven and earth with the beams of his glory : and it is an holy nature in us, which makes us fit to receive him. As without holiness, God could not be glorious in himself ; *Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory, Isa.* 6. 3 ; so without holiness in our natures, we could not be glorious with God. We are no more fit for heaven in a state of nature, than a vile particle of earth is fit to become a star. In heaven there are duties to be done, and privileges to be enjoyed. The work cannot be done, the reward cannot be received, without a new nature. The glorifying God, and enjoying him, is the glory of heaven. How can we do the one, or receive the other, without the change of our affections ? Can God have a voluntary glory from his enemy ? Or can his enemy delight in the enjoyment of him ?

1. Regeneration, and the new nature, is necessary to the *duty* of heaven. Eternity cannot free us from duty. Some duties are essential to the relation of a creature : some result only from this or that state of the creature. The alteration in the state, changes the duty proper to that state : but no place, no state, can exempt a creature from those duties which are essential to him as a creature. It is impossible to conceive any relation, without some new debt or service. From every change in relations in the world,

* κατεργάζεσθαι polish.

there arises some new duty, which was not incumbent upon a man before. The relation which a regenerate man has to God here, is the same which it is in heaven : but it is manifest there in an higher degree, and a choicer fruition. Thence therefore will arise, though not any new duty that we can conceive ; yet fresher obligations to those services which are proper for that place. Without a change of nature, it is not possible for any man, were he admitted thither, to perform the duties of heaven. Holy work is troublesome to a natural man here : and the more heavenly it was in itself, the more disgustful to corrupt nature. What was in a little measure holy, was a drudgery upon earth : and what is in a greater measure holy, cannot be a satisfaction in heaven to an old frame.

There are some natural motives to some duties here ; and our indigency takes part with them, as in that of prayer ; but those of a more elevated strain, as love, and praise, and admirations of God, our natures are more averse to. What duty can be performed without a will ? It is concluded by most, that the happiness of heaven consists as much, if not more, in the frame of the will, than in that of the understanding. If the will be not new framed, what capacity is there to perform the service requisite to that happy state ? We must first be made just here, before we can be made perfect above ; *Spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. 12. 23.* Just by an imputed righteousness, holy by an inherent righteousness, before they were transplanted to a state of perfection. Without a perfect frame, none can perform the choice duties of heaven : and without righteousness here, we cannot be made perfect there.

But what are the duties of heaven, that cannot be performed without a new nature ? I answer, in the first place, *attendance on God.* Some kind of service which we cannot understand, in the state here below. The angels stand before God, and wait his commands ; there is a pleasure of God which they do ; *Ye ministers*

of his that do his pleasure, Psa. 103. 21. There is a *will of God done in heaven, as well as upon earth*: There are acts of adoration performed by them; they *cover their faces*: they are commanded to worship the Lord Christ. Their holiness fits them for their attendance; therefore called the holy angels. It is against the nature of devils to perform such acts as those, which the holiness of angels fits them for. Glorified souls shall be as the angels of God in heaven; *But are as the angels of God in heaven, Matt. 22. 30.* Equal to angels in their state, as they are angels in heaven: equal to angels in their work, as they are angels of God, attending on God, and ministering unto him; though what that ministry shall be, is not easily known in the extent of it. Is it usual in this world, to take up a mean and vile person and bring him to an immediate attendance on a prince, without due preparation? God chooses some out for an immediate attendance on him in heaven; but he sends his Spirit to be their tutor, to breed them up, and grace their deformed souls with beautiful features, that they may be meet to stand before him. When God calls any to do him service in a particular station in the world, he gives them another heart; as he did to *Saul for the kingdom*. Is there not much more necessity of it for an immediate service of God in heaven? A malefactor, by pardon, is in a capacity to come into the presence of a prince, and serve him at his table: but he is not in a fitness till his noisome garments be taken off. Can one that is neither pardoned nor purified; one with the guilt of rebellion upon him, and a nature of rebellion in him, be fit to stand before God?

Again, *contemplation of God*, is a work in heaven. There shall be a perfect knowledge; therefore a delightful speculation. *The angels behold his face*, and that always. The saints *shall see him as he is*. It is not a stupid sight, but a gazing upon the face of this Sun, with a refined and ravishing delight. For this work, there must be *a change of judgment*. The eye must be re-

stored. It is as possible for a blind eye to behold the Sun, or a weak eye to stare in the face of it, as for a blind understanding to behold God. For it is not a being in the place of heaven, but having a faculty disposed, which elevates us to the knowledge of him. Things that are corporeal, cannot know things that are spiritual. We cannot in this sensitive body, view the face of an angel, and understand his nature; much less with a body of a total death, see the face of God, which is above all created beings, more than any spiritual creature is above sense. In heaven the saints *shall know him, as they are known of him*; perfectly, as far as the capacity of a creature can extend, *1. Cor. 13. 12.* Has God any scales upon his eyes? Does he not know perfectly what he knows? So shall the glorified saints. But if a natural man were admitted into heaven, what prospect could he have with a blind understanding? As men under the gospel-administrations, cannot see the kingdom of God, even in the midst of it, without a new birth; so neither could they see the kingdom of God in the midst of heaven itself, without a new frame: if not see it, much less enjoy it.

For the contemplation of God in heaven, there must be a change of will. *Men like not to retain God in their knowledge*, when he is represented to them in the dark, yet pleasant glass of nature, *Rom. 1. 28.* The apostle there speaks it of the heathens, and the wisest of them, their philosophers, who, though pleased with the contemplation of nature, yet were not pleased with the contemplation of God in nature: much less will they like him, when he discovers himself clothed with the light of holiness as a garment. That vicious eye, which is too weak to behold, with any delight, the image of the sun in a glass, or a pail of water, will be much more too weak to gaze upon it in its brightness in the firmament. If there be no delight to know God here, what pleasure, what fitness can there be in the same frame, to contemplate him above? Let

me ask you; have you any pleasure in the study of God? What is the reason then, that in your retirements, when you have nothing to do, your thoughts are no more upon him? What is the reason, that if any motion offers to advise you to fix your thoughts upon him, you so soon shift it off, as a troublesome companion, and some slight jolly thought is admitted with gladness into those embraces which the other courted? Can such a temper be fit for heaven, where nothing but thoughts of God run through the veins of glorified souls? If the discovery of God's glory in the gospel is accounted no better than folly by *natural men, and therefore not received*; the manifestation of it above, would meet with no better valuation of it, unless the temper both of judgment and will were changed: They are spiritually to be discerned here, and no less spiritually to be discerned above. The weak and waterish eye must be cured by some powerful medicine, before it can stare upon the light of the sun, or delight itself in its glory.

Love is another duty in heaven. Love is a grace that shoots the gulf with us, and attends us not only to the suburbs, but into the very heart of heaven, when other graces conduct us only to the gates, and then take their leaves of us, as having no business there. *Charity never faileth, 1 Cor. 13. 8.* And indeed, it is so essentially our duty in every place, that it is concluded, that God cannot free us from the obligation of it, whilst we remain his creatures; because God being infinitely good, and therefore infinitely amiable, and infinitely gracious to them, it would seem unrighteous and inconsistent with supreme goodness, to forbid the creature an affection to that which is infinitely excellent, and a gratitude to its Benefactor, which can be paid only in love. Now though we are bound to love God in the highest degree, yet every new mercy adds a fresh obligation to return our affection to him. So when we shall have the clearest beams of God's love darting upon us from heaven, we shall also

have higher obligations to love him, both for his excellency, which shall be more visible; and his love, which shall be more sensible.

Now can the heart of a natural man cling about God? Can it forget its father's house, and be wholly taken up with the Creator's excellency? Can he that *loved pleasure more than God* in the world, love God more than pleasures in heaven, without an alteration of his soul? No: the heart must be first circumcised by God before we can *love God with all our heart*; *Deut. 30. 6.* If we will not be subject to the law of God here, how can we be subject to the love of God, which is the law of heaven? How can we cleave to God without love, or relish him without delight? No man in a natural estate, could stay in heaven, because he does not love the person whose presence only makes it heaven. How can there be a conformity to God in affection, without a conformity to his holiness? A choiceness of love, with a perverseness of will; a supremacy of delight, without a rectitude of heart; a love of God, without a loathing of sin; a fervency of love, with a violence of lust: all these are contradictions. He that lives in hatred of God, cannot perform the main duty of heaven; and therefore what should he do there?

Finally, *Praise* is a service in heaven. If a pure angel be not sufficient for so elevated a duty, how unfit then is a drossy soul? What is the angels' note, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, Isa. 6. 3*; this can never be the note of the natural man, for how can he possibly praise that which he hates? What is the note of glorified saints? It is *Hallelujah*; *salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: Rev. 19. 1.* And again they said, *Hallelujah*, ver. 3. *Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth*, ver. 6. Nothing but hallelujah four times, ver. 1, 3, 4, 6. How can that heart frame an hallelujah to God, that is filled with jealousies of him? How can he exalt the honour of God, who was always pleased

with the violations of it? How can he rejoice at the Lord's reigning, that would not have one lust subdued by his power? How can a natural man, as natural, ever be wound up to a height, fit for such strains, since *out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks?* The tongue can never be framed to praise, while the heart is evil. Our blessed Saviour must be *glorified in us*, before he can be glorified by us.

If a man in a mere natural state, be unfit for this heavenly work, how unfit are then their tongues to sound his praise, which are always filled with reproaches of God? And how can their ears endure to hear it from others, which were never offended with the blasphemies of him? They could never rejoice in this heavenly concert, were they admitted. Nay, their enmity to the work, would not permit their stay. The smoke of pure incense, is fitter, rather to drive a swine out of the room, than to invite his continuance.

(2.) The new birth is necessary, as to the duty, so to the *reward* of heaven. As the reward is exceeding glorious, the preparation thereto must be exceeding gracious. The rewards of heaven are something incorporated with us, inlaid in the very frame of our souls, and cannot be conceived enjoyable, without a change in the nature of the subject. Man was first formed, before he was brought into the garden of Eden, or pleasure; *There he put the man whom he had formed, Gen. 2. 8.* Man must be new formed, before he be brought into that place, which is the antitype of Eden, the place of eternal and spiritual pleasure. A natural man can no more relish the rewards of heaven, than a dead carcase can esteem a crown, and a purple robe: or be delighted with the true pleasure of heaven, than a swine that loves to wallow in the mire, can be delighted with a bed of roses. A disorder in nature, is a prohibition to all happiness belonging to that nature. A distempered

body, under the fury of a disease, can find no delight in the pleasures of the healthful. A *wicked* man, with a troubled and foaming *sea* of sin, and lust in his mind, would find no more rest in heaven, than a man, with his disjointed members upon a rack, can in the beauty of a picture. We must be *spiritually minded*, before we can have either *life or peace*, *Rom.* 8. 6. Righteousness in the soul, is the necessary qualification for the peace and joy in the kingdom of God; *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom.* 14. 17. While malice remains in the devil's nature, were he admitted into heaven, he would receive torment instead of content. A wicked man would meet with hell in the midst of heaven, as long as he carries his own rack within him, boiling and raging lusts in his heart, which can receive no contentment, without objects suitable to them, let the place be what it will. Heaven indeed, is not only a place, but a nature; and it is a contradiction to think that any can be happy with a nature contrary to the very essence of happiness.

The pleasure and reward of heaven is, a *perfect likeness* to God and Christ. This is the great privilege of heaven, which the Apostle, in the midst of his ignorance of other particulars, resolves upon as certain, as that which results from regeneration, and being the sons of God, and is the full preparation for the beatific vision; *Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, 1 John* 3. 2. He seems to intimate this, that we can never be like him when he appears, unless we be now, while we are here, the sons of God; nor ever be admitted to a sight of him. As Christ presented himself without spot to God, when he laid the foundation of our redemption; so he presents his people *without blemish to God*, when he lays on the topstone of it in our glorification. Now as we cannot

be like to Christ in our walk here, without a new birth; neither can we without it, be like to Christ in glory hereafter. It is not the place makes us like to God, but there must be a likeness to God, to make the place pleasant to us.

When once the angels had corrupted their nature, the short stay they made in heaven after, neither pleased them nor reformed them. And when Satan appeared before God, among the *sons of God*, neither God's presence, nor his speaking to him did any wise better him. He came a devil, and he went away so, without any pleasure in the place, or presence, but by the permission of God to wreak his malice on holy Job. An unlikeness to God, is the misery of the creature. It is therefore impossible, whilst the soul remains in that state, that it can arrive at blessedness, because it is a contradiction, to think that felicity can be enjoyed in a contrariety to, and separation from the fountain of it; *Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish, Psal. 73. 27.* It is by faith, beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel here, that we must be transformed into his image, before we can be *changed into his glory*. And we cannot be like God by holy actions only, though we had performed as many of them, as all the holy men in the world ever did, as to the matter of them, abstracted from the principle and end; and the reason is, because God is not only holy in his actions, but holy in his nature; and therefore we must not only have actions materially good, but a holy nature suitable to the holiness of God; otherwise we neither are, nor never can be like him.

The *fruition* of God is a privilege of heaven, which necessarily follows this likeness. God is the eternal portion of glorified souls, upon which they live. *He is the strength of their hearts.* There is none but God in heaven is the chief object of their love and delight. The presence of God makes the fulness of joy, *Psal. 16. 11.* His favour, and the light of his glorious countenance, constitutes heaven and happiness; not

the place, but the countenance. God's frown kindles hell, and his smile renders any place an heaven. Now an old nature cannot have a look from God; for since he is infinitely holy, he must hate unholiness; infinitely true, he must hate falsity. As it is impossible a man can love truth and falsity, righteousness and unrighteousness, as such, at one and the same time, in an intense degree; therefore an impure nature cannot be happy, unless God be mutable. God cannot smile on the old Adam, unless he hate himself. What satisfaction can such an one possibly have in God's presence? How can he savour the society of God, that never loved it? Do we naturally love any warm mention of God? Have we not a stony deadness to any heavenly motion that falls upon us? A mighty quickness to receive sinful motions in that which we love. Do not our countenances fall, and our delight take to it itself, and fly away, at any lively appearance of God? If we have such an enmity to his law, which is but a transcript of his holiness, much greater must our enmity be to the original copy.

Hence in scripture men are said to *refuse his law*, *Psal. 78. 10*; to *forsake his law*, *Psal. 119. 53*; to *be far from his law*, *Psal. 119, 150*. Darkness does not more naturally vanish at the appearance of the sun, than an old nature will fly from the glory and brightness of God. A mass of black darkness, and an immense sphere of light, may as soon be espoused together, as a friendly amity be struck up between God and an unrenewed man. *God is light without darkness*, *1 John 1. 5*. Man is darkness itself, as if nothing else entered into the composition of his corrupt nature, *Eph. 5. 8*. If there be therefore a disagreement, contrariety, and unwillingness on both sides, how can any pleasing correspondence be effected? If God should bring a man, with his corrupt nature, into local heaven, God could not please himself in it, nor such an one delight himself in God, no more than a swine can be pleased

with the presence of an angel, or a mole sport itself with the beauty of flowers, or a vitiated eye rejoice at the brightness of light. We must really make God such an one as we shape him in our natural fancy, and like to us, before we can take any pleasure in converse with him. Our nature therefore must be changed, before we can please him, or be satisfied in him. His presence else will cause fear, while our sinful state remains, an affection inconsistent with happiness.

The *company of the saints* is an adjunct of happiness in heaven. A sitting down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*, in a festal converse, is a part of that felicity; the coming to be with an *innumerable company of angels, with the general assembly, and church of the first-born*, is not the least thing in the composition of this happiness, *Heb. 12. 22, 23.* What joy is that man capable of, which should be surrounded with company he hath the greatest disaffection to, where he could not meet with any one person, without the holy quality he hath an antipathy against? A natural man never loved holiness, as holiness, here. The more beautiful the image of God was in any, the more burdensome was their company. The more degrees any good man wanted of perfection in righteousness, the more tolerable was a familiarity with him. If holiness in others, in a lower degree, were disaffected by you, how can you bear the perfection of it? If the mixed and dark goodness in renewed men, which was but a weak flash of the glory of heaven, were unwelcome, how will you be able to endure the lustre of it?

Again, glorified saints could not have the least converse with such an one. If carnal nature were a trouble to them here, when they had many relics of corruption; much more must it be above, if they were admitted into that place of glory, because the more holy any creature is, the more it hates that which is

contrary to that holiness ; the more settled we are in any thing, the more we loathe that which is opposite to it ; all the folly in their hearts here, which was the principle of any agreement between the one and the other, is done away, and the disagreeing principle perfected in the blessed. There must therefore be a change in them, to take pleasure in you ; or a change in you, to take pleasure in them. They must return to the frame of old Adam and put off the renewed image of God, before they can delight in you ; or you must come up to the frame of the new Adam, and be new created after the same image, before you can delight in them. The truth is, supposing a man admitted into the heavenly place, with an old nature, he could not continue there. For the saints must either leave heaven, or he must. Light and darkness cannot agree ; what makes the one happy, cannot beatify the other. Saints shall not leave it, because it is their inheritance ; it was prepared for them, and they for it ; a natural man must, because it was never prepared for him, nor he fitted for it.

In the heavenly world are spiritual delights *inconceivable* : which without a new and heavenly nature, it is impossible to relish. In the *light* of God, *they see light*, and they *drink of the rivers of God's pleasure*, and are *satisfied with the fatness of his house*, *Psa. 36. 8, 9.* Now are the pleasures of God carnal or spiritual ? What is God's pleasure, shall be the pleasure of glorified souls. How can the sordid old temper be fit for spiritual delights ? Flesh can never savour but the things of the flesh ; another palate is necessary to relish the things of the spirit ; *They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit, Rom. 8. 5 ; φρονεσιν*, signifies to savour, or relish. There must be a transformation by the renewing of the mind, *Rom. 12. 2*, which is the palate of the soul, before we can know what the will of God is, or taste what the pleasures of God are. Without

it, we can no more relish the pleasures of God, than we can know his will.

All satisfaction does not result from the intrinsic excellency of the object, or the beauty of a place, or a power in any thing to affect us ; but from a faculty rightly disposed to the object, and a congruity and agreement between that and the understanding, and between that and the will. Brutes cannot be delighted with intellectual pleasures, because they want a faculty ; nor fools, because they want a right disposition of that faculty. Purity of heart only gives us a relish of the purity of pleasure ; *To the pure, all things are pure ; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, Tit. 1. 15.* An ill humour on the palate, tinctures the meat, and imbitters that which was sweet in itself. It must be freed from that vicious juice, before it can relish the sweetness of food. Natural men, because of the impurity of their natures, savour not those spiritual delights, which the word, and prayer, and other holy duties afford in themselves. What fitness then is there in this state, for the delights of heaven, which are as much superior to those delights in duties, as the sun surmounts a star in brightness ? The best unregenerate man is sunk in sense, swallowed up in sense : and what suitability can there be between a spiritual delight, and a sensual frame ? True pleasures, and contrary desires, can never abide together.

A carnal man hath no apprehensions of spiritual delights, but by the measures of animal pleasure. And if there be no conception of them in the understanding, what motion to them can there be in the will, or what fitness for them in the affection ? Without a new nature, a new frame, we are no more able to understand or enjoy the pleasures of heaven, than a bat is to take pleasure in a mathematician's lines, or a philosopher's books. It is not conceivable how God can make any man happy against his will, because all pleasure consists in the agreeableness of the

will to the object. The whole scheme of heaven must be changed, to make such men happy, that have not tempers suited to its present state. The bright hangings of heaven must be taken down, and others put in their place, to please a vicious nature. But I now go on to the improvement.

PART VI.

INFERENCES FROM THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION.

Extent of human depravity—Prevailing ignorance of this doctrine—The duty of christian parents—Insufficiency of every thing without regeneration—How irrational it is to expect security and glory in an unregenerate state—The sinfulness of such a state—The blessedness of a regenerate state—Clear evidences of it—Their importance—How to be attained.

I. **I**F then regeneration be absolutely necessary to a gospel state, and the enjoyment of eternal glory in heaven ; then it informs us,

1. *How much the nature of man is depraved.* For otherwise there were no need of his being born again ; and no reason could be imagined, why our blessed Saviour should so pressingly urge the necessity of it. If man's nature were according to his original frame, it would please God, because it was of his own creation. But we are flesh by our natural birth ; and therefore to be happy, we must be spiritual by a second birth. It is not a new mending, a new repairing, but a new birth. We are by sin as distant from God and grace, as death from life, as nothing from

being. It is not a death in appearance, but a certain death. God foretold it to Adam; *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die, Gen. 2. 17.* I suppose there is nothing here of a corporeal death meant, but a death of his integrity and righteous nature, upon this act of disobedience; and the reason is, because a temporal death did not ensue presently. And God uses to be punctual, when he fixed a time to any threatening, as here he did, *in the day*, at that very time thou shalt die. Had it been meant of a temporal death, he had died at that instant.

When God threatened Pharaoh, to-morrow such and such a plague shall come, it was certainly so; the destruction of Nineveh in forty days, had been inflicted too, had they not repented. When he had promised any mercy or deliverance at such a time, it was certainly performed: the *very day*, at the end of the time appointed, the Israelites came out of Egypt. *Exod. 12. 41.* And though God threatened Hezekiah with death, and bids him set his house in order, yet he fixed no time, *Isa. 38. 1.* Besides, a temporal death was not necessary to his punishment; God might have cast both body and soul away together into hell. Besides, a temporal death, or death of the body, was fixed after the promise of the seed, as a punishment superadded upon his sin, as well as the rest, of his eating his bread in the sweat of his brow, and the pain of women's conception and travail, which were to put him in mind of his sin in his redeemed state.

Therefore I question whether a temporal death, or an obnoxiousness to it, were at all meant there; but a spiritual death, the death of his righteous nature. It is a certain death, a mighty depravation, a loss of a noble frame, a beautiful rectitude. How may we cry, as the prophet in another case, *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!*

how art thou cut down to the ground; Isa. 14. 12. How is our beauty not only defaced, but changed into deformity! How dreadfully are we fallen, not only to lame, but to destroy ourselves so, that we cannot rise again, as a man fallen may! We are so inconceivably changed from what we were, that we cannot be recovered without a new creation, without a new birth, O that we had a true and sensible prospect of this! Give me leave to say, that though the Fall be the cause of all our misery, yet the true consideration and sense of it, is the first step to all our happiness. And we cannot take so full a view of it, in the extent of the nature of it, as in the consideration of this doctrine, viz. the *necessity* of regeneration.

2. If regeneration be so necessary, then how much to be lamented is the *ignorance* of this doctrine in the world? And strange and sad it is, that it should be so little considered. The common talk is, of serving God, and reforming the life; but who of a thousand, speaks of the necessity of a new nature? It is a sad case, that when a doctrine is so clear, men should be so stupid, and deludingly damn themselves; that they should be so sottishly ignorant of this, who have bibles in their hands and houses; yet not understand this, which is the great purpose for which God even sent the scripture among the sons of men. It is a shame not to have the knowledge of this great and necessary truth. As the apostle says in another case, *Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak it to your shame, 1 Cor. 15. 24.*

How strange and uncouth doth this doctrine sound in the ears of the carnal world, which wonder at it, as Nicodemus did at our Saviour's proposal; and think all our discourses of it, an heap of enthusiastic nonsense? It is as if we should speak parables; as if you should talk of astronomy to the natural fool, or read divinity in Arabic to a man who understands only his native language. How little sensible is the world of

the necessity of this work? They expect Christ should change their misery into glory, without changing their hearts, and fitting their spirit for it, which will never be. They think it enough for them, that Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin, without being formed again in their souls; as the poor Jews at this day expect a Messiah, not to alter the frame of their souls, but the frame of the world; not to subdue their spirits, but to conquer the nations to be their vassals. How should this stupidity of men be a matter of lamentation to us!

3. If regeneration be so absolutely necessary, how should christian parents endeavour all they can to have *their children regenerate*? There is no necessity they should have great estates, and live bravely in the world; but there is a necessity, a great necessity, they should be new creatures, and live spiritually. In leaving the one to your children, you leave them but earth; in leaving the other, you convey heaven to them. There is an obligation upon you; their old polluted nature was derived from you; make them amends, by endeavouring to derive grace to them by spiritual instruction: you made them children of wrath; why will you not endeavour to make them children of God, and heirs of heaven. Education of itself will not produce this noble work; nor the bare hearing of the word, or any outward means whatsoever, by their own strength; yet the Spirit often blesses them, and very much; and I doubt not but a great number that are regenerate, had the first seeds sown in them by religious education; and I have made the observation in many: Timothy had a religious education, both by his mother and grandmother, though this did not renew him; for Paul, by the preaching of the gospel, was the instrument of that: he calls *him his own son in the faith*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 2. Yet no question, his religious instructions from his parents did much facilitate this work. Use all endeavours therefore, to convince them of the necessity of a new birth: be earnest with them,

till you see it produced, that they may not curse you for being the instruments of their beings, but bless you for being the instruments of their spiritual life.

4. This doctrine acquaints us with *the insufficiency of every thing else* without this, to enable us to enter into the kingdom of God.

Great knowledge is not sufficient. *Natural knowledge* is not. All the wisdom of Solomon in a man, though it may enable him to take an exact measure of nature from the highest star to the meanest insect, no more fits him for heaven, than the stone in the head of a toad expels his venomous nature. We have more relics in Adam's nature in knowledge, than we have in righteousness. To be a philosopher, physician, or statesman, is not essential to happiness in this world; much less can it prepare a man for the happiness of another. But grace is as essential to it, as natural heat and radical moisture are to the life of a man. Jesus Christ came not to make us scholars in naturals, but to endue us with such a knowledge, as is in order to eternal happiness; and with such a renewing principle, as might make us capable of heaven. Knowledge and wisdom are some of the choicest flowers in nature's garden: but it will be a small advantage, to descend to hell with our heads full of wit and sophistry. One saving cry from a new-born infant-soul, is of more value than the knowledge of all philosophers. Spiritual knowledge is not, that is, the knowledge of spiritual doctrines, the knowledge of scripture itself. Nicodemus had a good stock of this; he understood the letter of the scripture; was well read in all the parts of the law; he was thought fit to be one of the great Sanhedrim: something else was requisite besides this; a new birth was still wanting. What if we understood the mind of the Spirit of God in every verse in the bible; were able to discourse profoundly of the great mysteries of the gospel; had the gift of prophecy, and knowledge of things to come; had the interpretation of the

whole book of the Revelation written in our minds; what will all this avail us? An evangelical head, will be but drier fuel for eternal burning, without an evangelical impression upon the heart, and the badge of a new nature. Men may prophesy in Christ's name, *in his name cast devils out of bodies, and devils of error out of men's minds*; yet not be regarded by Christ: but he says to them, *I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity, Matt. 7. 22, 23.* If they had had this mark and gospel impression, our Lord would have known them. Christ in heaven would have owned himself formed in the heart: he could not have been ignorant of his own nature and offspring.

A man may then have all the learning of christians and heathens stored up in his head, and not the least stamp of it in his heart. He may be wise in knowledge, and a fool in improvement. A heap of knowledge is not wisdom among men, without an application of that knowledge to particular exigencies and usefulness.

Outward reformation is not sufficient without regeneration. Regeneration is never without reformation of life: but this may be without that: we may be outward christians without an inward principle, though we can never be inward christians without an outward holiness. The new birth is properly an internal work, and shows itself externally; as the heat of the heart, and vital parts, will evidence itself in outward motions: *The king's daughter is all glorious within*, as well as without, *Psal. 45. 13.* What a vanity would it be, to boast of freedom from other diseases, if thou hast the plague upon thee? What a poor comfort is it, to boast of thy being without gross immoralities, whilst the plague of thy nature remains uncured? Outward reformation only, though of excellent use, is but a new appearance, not a new creature; a change of life, not of the heart: whereas this work we discourse of, is a new birth in the un-

derstanding and will; it begins at the spirit, and descends from thence to the body, 1 *Thes.* 5. 23. It is a sanctification in *spirit, soul,* and then *body.* Can that which can be no evidence to us in self-examination, be of itself sufficient to heaven? If you retire to take a view of yourselves, whether you belong to God, will you judge by your outward actions or inward frame? There is no characteristic difference in any external action, between a true christian and an hypocrite: that therefore which is not a sufficient evidence to us, of a right to happiness, cannot be a sufficient preparation of ourselves for it.

This reformation may proceed either from *force* or *fear.* Such a reformation is from impediments, not from inclination. The cutting a bird's wings, takes not away its propensity to fly, but its ability. The cutting the claws of a lion, or pulling out his teeth, changes not his lionish nature. Fear restrained Herod from putting John to death, when his will was inclined to the act, *Matt.* 14. 5. Fear may pare the nails of sin; grace only can hinder the growth, and take away its life. This does but only stop the streams, not choke the fountain.

Or in the next place, reformation may originate in a sense of *outward interest.* It may be a rational abstinence from those sordid pleasures, which debase a man's esteem, and prey upon his reputation; and in the mean time, his inward lusts may triumph, while outward appearances are stopped. Such a splendid life may consist with those inward vermin, more contrary to the pure nature of God, and as inconsistent with a man's happiness. The river which ran in open view, may sink, and run as fiercely through subterranean caverns. Men may cast out one devil, to make way for seven more spiritual ones. The interest which restrains outward acts, will not restrain inward lusts.

Thus it appears, that an outward reformation, without an inward grace, can no more rectify nature, than an abstinence from luxury, can cure a disease a man

hath contracted through intemperance, without some other medicine to eradicate the distemper. Outward applications will do little good in a fever, unless the spring of the disease be altered, and a new crisis wrought in the blood. All outward acts are but *bodily exercise, which profit little*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. Outward reformation does sweeten the conversation, but does not purge the man: he only is a vessel unto honour, who has purified himself from these things. *If a man therefore purge himself from those, he shall be a vessel unto honour*, 2 Tim. 2. 21. Outward reformation only, it is a cleansing of our life, but not ourselves. Self-nature must be purged.

Morality without regeneration is not sufficient. By morality, I mean, not only an outward reformation, but some love to moral virtue, as the heathens had, raised upon the thoughts of the excellency of it. Nicodemus was a moral man: he had some affection to Christ, upon the consideration of his miracles; he had never else ventured to come to him, so much as by night. He had no blot upon his conversation; he had desires to be instructed. This was more than a bare abstinence from sin; yet notwithstanding, besides those moral qualifications, he must have a new birth, before he can see the kingdom of God. Men may do much good, be very useful to others in their generation, yet be in the very bottom of unregeneracy. An healing witch, as well as a hurting one, is the devil's client, and in covenant with him.* There is not so great a difference between the highest degree of glory in heaven, and the lowest degree of grace on earth, as there is between the lowest degree of saving grace, and the highest degree of natural excellency, because the difference between those is specific, as between a rational and irrational creature: the difference between the other is only in degree, as between an infant and a man.

* Burrough's Moses' Choice, p. 711.

It is one thing to have a love to moral virtue, another thing to have a love to God in it; one thing to move for self, and another thing to move for the glory of the Creator; one thing to be animated by reason, and another thing to be inspired by the Holy Ghost. What can a moral honesty profit that man, who values the world's trash above the Creator's glory? What though he be honest and useful to his neighbours, must his affection to God be measured by his honesty among men? The great business is from what principle it flows. What if he does good to others, whilst he does his Creator wrong, by fostering any one thing in his heart above him? Can his goodness to others make a compensation for his disesteem of God? The bravest man in the whole world, who hath no other descent than from Adam, must have a new quality put into his heart, before he can be happy: for if a new birth be necessary, all endowments below it are to no purpose for the attainment of that state for which it is intended.

Whatsoever is of the old Adam in us, though it be a beautiful flower, must wither and die; *For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withers, and the flower thereof fadeth away,* 1 Pet. 1. 23, 24. The apostle sets in opposition, the incorruptible seed, whereby they were born, and the fairer flowers in nature's garden. The best thing which a man glories in, is a flower, but withering: it is a glory, but the glory of the flesh: it hath no lustre in the sight of God: it is not a flower to be set in heaven: it is only the word of God, and the impressions made on us by that word, which endure for ever. As herbs cannot grow without partaking of the natural influence and beams of the sun, so nothing stands and flourishes, but what partakes of the nature and spirit of Christ. Nay, it is so far from being sufficient, that it is a great hinderance of regeneration, without the over-powering grace of God, because it is the glory of a man; that is, that

wherein a man glories. Men are apt to rest upon their morals, without reflecting upon their naturals. They see no spots in their lives; and therefore will not believe there are any in their hearts. They are so taken up with the Pharisee, their proud thoughts of their being above others, that they never think how much they have inwardly of the publican, in coming short of the glory of God. Unregenerate morality therefore is not sufficient. The heart must be changed before moral virtues can commence graces. When this is once done, what were moral before, become divine, as having a new principle to quicken them, and a new end to direct them.

Neither are *religious professions* sufficient for our entrance into the kingdom of God without this change. Can you upon a serious consideration conclude, that this only is the import of all those scriptures which speak of being born of God, raised from a death in sin, quickened and led by the Spirit, created in righteousness and true holiness? Are not these things, in the very manner of speaking them, elevated above any mere profession, which may be declared to the world without any such work, which is the evident intendment of those scriptures? It is not the naming the name of Christ, but the departing from iniquity; a departing from it in our nature, as well as in our actions, that is the badge whereby the Lord knows who are his; *The Lord knows who are his: and let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity, 2 Tim. 2. 19.* Religious profession only is but a form, a figure, a shape of godliness: a picture made by art, without life and power; and an enlivened faculty, and a divine principle whence it should proceed; it is but a name of life at best under a state of death; *Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead, Rev. 3. 1.* Professions without a new nature, are no more the things God requires of us, than sacrifices under the law, without a broken heart: it is not a following our

Saviour in profession, but in regeneration, which gives the apostles a title to that promise of sitting upon his throne in glory: *Ye that have followed me in regeneration, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, Matt. 19. 28.* Judas had followed Christ till that time, and after, in a profession, but not in the regeneration, not from a regenerated principle.

Again, multitudes of external *religious duties and privileges* are not sufficient. Men are very apt to place their security here: it was the great labour of the prophet Isaiah, to bring the Jews in his time off from them: God does not require attendance on ordinances, as the ultimate end, but as means to the beginning and promoting a new birth; *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? Wash ye, make ye clean, Isa. 11. 16.* The resting in these, is the manifest destruction of men's souls, when thousands of sacrifices to God cannot be acceptable without a new nature. We naturally affect an easy religion; and outward acts of worship, especially under the gospel, have no great difficulty in them. Men would rather be at a great expence of sacrificing, than crucify one beloved sin; and cringe a thousand times before the cross of Christ, than nail one corruption to it: how easy a work were it to get to heaven, if nothing else were required but to be a member of the christian visible church? Circumcision was a privilege, but it availed nothing without a *new creature, Gal. 5. 6.* There was another circumcision made without hands, the work of God, that was required; *Col. 2. 11.* A *new creature*, without which, outward circumcision signified nothing.

The practice of some duties may stand with an inward hatred of them, as the abstinence from some sins may stand with an inward love to them. Outward worship is but a carcase; when the soul is not conformed to God, the object of worship, and does not attain an union to, and communion with God,

which is the end of worship, what are all acts of worship without a nature suitable to the God we approach in them? Judge not therefore of your state, by any external actions: no outward act, but unregenerated persons may do, yea, they may express much zeal in them; they may have their bodies as martyrs consumed by flames, without having their corruption consumed by grace; an impure breath may make as good music to the ear in a pipe, as that which is most healthy and sweet. There is something more necessary than a bare performance of duties.

Nay more, *convictions* are not sufficient. Nicodemus was startled by our Saviour's miracles, believes him to be a prophet sent by God, acknowledgeth that God was with him, *John* 3. 2, yet still the necessary qualification of a new birth was wanting. Your spirits may be torn in pieces by terror, the heart of stone may be rent asunder, and yet no heart of flesh appear; the ground may be plowed, yet not sown: sensuality and lust may be kept under by a spirit of bondage, when it is not cast out by a spirit of adoption: the sun may scorch you, and not enliven you: the knowledge of the foulness of sin, and the fierceness of wrath, is the work of the Spirit in the law; the new birth is the work of the Spirit in the gospel; the stone may be cut and hewed by the law, and yet never polished by the gospel, never brought into covenant; *I have hewed them by my prophets, but they like men have transgressed the covenant, Hos.* 6. 5. 7.

It is not then great knowledge, fair coloured fruit, oil in the lamp of life, loud professions, glittering services, or tearing convictions, which are this badge, whereby Christ knows his own from all the world besides; all these will be answered, *I know you not*; is it not then a worthy work, and high time to get that new nature, whereby God will know thee to belong to him? Professions may be false, outward re-

formation may be but as a painted sepulchre: knowledge only elevates the understanding; but as our communion lies in the acts of the will, there must be some work upon that to fit us for our great happiness. If these things are not sufficient, then profane men cannot expect heaven by the way of hell.

II. If regeneration be so absolutely necessary to salvation, how *miserable is the condition* of every unregenerate man! What a miserable case is it, that sinners should dream on in their delusions, till everlasting burnings confute their fancies, and turn their hopes into dreadful despair? Oh, how do most men live, as if this doctrine were a mere falsity; and act as if they would take heaven by the violence of their lusts, not by the industry of grace? Know you not that *an unrighteous nature shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived, &c.* 1 Cor. 6. 9. Is it possible you should be ignorant of that which stares you in the face, in every page in the bible? If you know not this, you know nothing. Be not deceived: Nothing is so natural as heart deceit, and presumptuous confidence; the apostle else would not have spoken of it with such an emphasis, but that he knew how apt men are to delude themselves with hopes of mercy in a state of sin. Self-flattery is one of the strongest branches which grows upon the pride of nature.

How vain is it to fancy to yourselves a fitness for heaven, while there are only preparations for hell? Whence should such imaginations arise? Not from God; it is contrary to all his professed declarations. Is it from yourselves? What reason have you to believe your fancies in spiritual things, who are so often mistaken in temporal? Is it from the devil? What reason have you to believe your greatest enemy? If this work be wrought, he hath for ever lost you: it is he that cherishes such notions, for he hath no plea-

sure to undo his kingdom, and lose his subjects. Never did any man use so much diligence to get a new nature, as the devil does to hinder him.

Will you seriously consider,

1. It is *highly irrational to expect security and glory* in an unregenerate state. Is it for us to separate those things which God hath joined, flesh and destruction, a new birth and a kingdom? That which doth naturally tend to hell, can never conduct us to heaven; can the old nature, which frames a fit subject for eternal vengeance, ever fashion it to be a vessel of eternal glory? There is as great a tendency in the old nature to hell, as there is of a stone, or lead, to the earth. If men may be saved in their unregeneracy,

God must be *false to himself*. False he must be to his truth, false to his holiness, false to his Son, false to the whole tenor of the gospel. God must change the covenant of grace, blot out all his threatenings in Scripture, give the lie to all his declarations in the word, proclaim himself unwise in all his administrations, if ever such a man be happy; and is it not a damnable conceit, and a provoking wish, to desire that God should belie himself to befriend us? There must be a new gospel, before any can be saved without a new nature; this cannot be: must God change his law, or we our lusts? God has settled and declared a decree, that none that are not born again, shall enter into the kingdom of God; his decree stands irreversible, the change must necessarily therefore be on our side.

As far as I can understand, *God must put himself out of heaven, before that such a man can come thither*: there can be no pleasure on either side with unsuitableness; if God be absent from heaven, as to his glorious presence, how can there be happiness? he loves his own righteousness better than to endure such men's presence; and they love their unrighteousness so much as not to bear his. No man cares for coming into a place which is possessed by one that he hates; they

can have no pleasure to be in a heaven with God, who were delighted to be in the world without him.
Eph. 2. 12.

Jesus Christ must be a *liar*, and the gospel *false*, if ever there be a heaven enjoyed by an old nature. He hath asserted it, that is truth itself; and is it not a madness to imagine a possibility of coming thither in spite of him? You may upon better grounds hope to be crowned monarch of the whole world to morrow, than to enter into heaven without being born again. Christ values his truth, though he did not his life, above our souls, and his word will stand firm against all presumptuous confidence whatsoever.

And suppose further that God should *reverse his gospel*, (which cannot be) and declare another, I cannot see how the case would be mended; for what gospel can God frame with a salvo to his own honour, without the creatures being righteous, to enjoy the benefit of it? Must God conform himself to the will of our lusts? Must he cast his holiness into the depths of the sea? Must he paint himself black to agree with our hue? as the negroes picture him of their own colour. In a word, must God cease to be God, that you may cease to be miserable? To desire happiness without a new nature, shows a contempt of God, since it is to desire it on terms, on which it is dishonourable for God to give it.

So that this doctrine is so certainly true, that if an angel from heaven should declare the contrary, he ought not to be believed; *Let him be accursed, Gal. 1. 8.* that is, he would be more a devil than an angel, and it would be an accursed doctrine: he must found his doctrine upon another gospel, and a gospel printed in hell, but impossible to have an *imprimature* from heaven. Is it possible then for any man, after such an assertion of our Saviour, to live under the hearing of the christian doctrine, and fancy a heavenly glory belonging to him without a heavenly nature?

As it is highly irrational, so it is *highly sinful*, to

lie in an unrenewed state. To continue in it after the declaration of God's holiness, in so eminent a manner in the death of his Son, is a high approbation of unrighteousness, and a contempt of his infinite purity; for since he has shown himself a hater of sin, and the old nature of Adam in the death of the Redeemer, more than he could any other way; the fostering the old nature in us, is a valuing that which God hath manifested his hatred of, and a slighting all the expressions of his love. It draws greater guilt upon our persons, than Adam did by his fall upon our natures; *If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin. John 15. 22.* If I had not told them those things, and preached heavenly doctrine to them, their sin had been as it were a petty larceny in comparison of what it is now, a treason against my Father's crown and dignity, *but now they have hated me and my Father.* Hence it follows, that such a man's condition must be exceeding miserable. Those that *have a part in the first resurrection, on them it is said the second death shall have no power, Rev. 20. 6.* Whether he means the resurrection of Christ, or the spiritual resurrection of the soul. The second death then shall have power over them that have no part in the first resurrection.

Such unregenerate men are *peculiarly miserable.* Such a man had better have been any other creature, a toad, a serpent, a beetle, liable to be trod to death by the next comer, than have been a man, and live and die with a serpentine nature, and without renewing grace, would be glad one day to change states with them; and it had been better to have been born in the darkest part of America than in England; and better to have lived in the blindest corner in England than in London, where he has heard so much, and so often, of the necessity of the new birth, and yet cherished an old nature: It is an astonishing madness this; better never to have been born a man, than not be a real christian, which he cannot be without this new birth,

this necessary regeneration ; better never to have entered by the door of baptism into the christian society, than not have a nature answerable to the baptismal intendment. There is not the meanest beggar that creeps in the street, the most ulcerous Lazarus that lies at a door, but if renewed, is infinitely happier than any one unrenewed can be with all worldly felicity.

All unrenewed men are *unavoidably miserable*. The mercy of God can never make you happy against his truth, the righteousness of God can never do it without the necessary qualification. Is it just with God to give his worst enemies the same reward of glory with his choicest friends? To those that never endeavoured to reform their lives according to the methods of the gospel, as to those who have had the holy image of his Son drawn and wrought in their hearts ; in *2 Tim. 4. 8.* he is said to be a *righteous, judge*, which could not be, if he gave the same rewards to both the contrary qualifications. Satan may as soon be saved as any man without a new birth : Though there be enough written against the salvation of devils, yet there is more written in the book of God against the salvation of men living and dying in an unregenerate state, than against the salvation of devils. Do any expect to see the kingdom of God without it? Why, that form on which you sit, that dust under your feet, far cleaner than ourselves by nature, are fitter to be brought into that place of glory ; the holiness of God can better endure them, than an unrenewed man ; he pronounced their kind good at the creation ; but never was an unrenewed nature pronounced good by God. You can no more shun an eternal misery without it, than you can a temporal death with it ; you can no more fly from hell than from yourselves. Our blessed Saviour, the Redeemer of the world, will know none for admission into happiness, without his badge upon them, *I never knew you, Matt. 7. 23.* You had nothing in you worthy my knowledge and

affection : Where is the evangelical impression upon your soul? will be the only question then asked.

I wish then that every unregenerate man would put the question to his soul, Can I dwell with everlasting burnings? Can I with a cheerful security meet the wrath of God in its march against me? Is eternal darkness a delightful state? Is an eternal separation from the blessed God to be desired? Is a present sensual life to be preferred before a joyful eternity? Is there any one scripture in the whole book of God can give me comfort in this state? What then dost thou, O my soul, spend thy thoughts about, since there is nothing to procure thy felicity, but this new birth?

III. Is it so, that without regeneration there is no salvation? Then how great is the comfort of that person, who hath attained this necessary thing? What a foundation is here for the composition of new songs for spiritual exultings? what a diffusion may there be of pleasure through the whole soul? That little regenerating principle within you is more necessary than the wisdom of Solomon, the power of Nebuchadnezzar, the glory of Ahasuerus, the reaching heads of the most knowing men in the world, and shall make you happy, when others in their unrenewed wisdom, and unsanctified wealth, shall descend to destruction.

1. *The least true grace* hath comfort from hence. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; therefore if he be born again, he shall see it; our Saviour does not say, except a man has been born so long, arrived to such a stature, but simply born again; it lies upon the essence, not upon the degree; a child that cries the first minute it is born, is in a state of life, as well as a man in the prime of his strength; a child has the nature of a man, though attended with some strong disease and great infirmities; though every true christian has not the same growth, yet he has the same birth, the same renewing spirit. *If man be in Christ, he is a new creature*; the apostle does not say, he is a strong crea-

ture, or a tall creature. John reckons three different states of Christians ; *Children, young men, and fathers*, and all in a state of the knowledge of God, 1 *John* 2. 13, 14.

2. Here is comfort in the *ignorance of the time* of the new birth. Except a man be born again, not except he know the time of his being born again ; the want of the knowledge of the time has troubled some ; but it is no matter for the time, if we find the essential properties ; our happiness is secured by the essence, not by the circumstance. It is the glory of those that were born in Sion, that they were born there, though the time of their birth were not exactly known by them, *Psal.* 87.5. Many may tell the first preparations to it, the first strong conviction, the first time they found their hearts affected ; this is more easy, than to tell the very time when spiritual life was infused, any more than to tell the punctual time when the child was quickened in the womb ; this is no more known, than that particular minute, when this or that addition was made to our stature and growth, though the growth itself be discernable.

3. Such are new born to the *enjoyment of God in glory*. If none shall see God without it, then those shall certainly see God who have it ; it is for the undefiled inheritance, that God did first beget you ; *He hath begotten us to a lively hope, to an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you ;* 1 *Peter* 1. 3. Had not God intended you for an everlasting converse with himself, he would not have taken such pains, but have let you lay in your blood, and run down the stream of nature into the ocean of a miserable eternity, with the common mass of the world. What comfort will this be, when you see the old house of your bodies ready to fall, that your re-born souls are ready to take possession of their eternal inheritance ? Paul was one of the highest rank in christianity, both in grace and office, yet the *crown of righteousness* was

not only laid up for him, and to be given to him, but to all that *love the appearing of Christ*, that is, to all those that from the principles of the new nature, aspire to that perfection, which shall be at the appearance of Christ, *2 Tim. 4. 8.* There is as certain a tendency by the ordination of God of a renewed soul to heaven, as of flame into the air. Grace and glory are in nature the same thing as a seed and a plant.

4. It is comfort upon this account, if new-born to heaven, then to all things which may *further your passage thither*, and assist you in it. To God as your God and king to protect you, as your father to cherish you; to the promises as your promises, as assurances and deeds for heaven; to a sanctification of all states for a furtherance of you in your travel to, and fitness for, this kingdom; to a sight of God in his ordinances, and in his providences: he will not deny a beam here in his institutions to those, for whom he reserves his full face hereafter; to fellowship with God in duties of worship, as a foretaste of a perpetual communion with him; to an improvement of all graces; to the perfect dress at last of all beautiful grace, which may completely fit you for an everlasting sight of God in heaven.

IV. If without the new birth there is no entering into heaven; then it stands you upon to clear up your *evidences* for the new birth. If the existence of it be necessary for our felicity, the knowledge of it is necessary for our comfort: this is the great distinguishing evangelical sign; without an inward principle of life, we have not reached the intendment of the gospel; *The words of Christ are spirit and life, John 6. 63. I am come that you might have life, John 10. 10.* He hath no interest in the gospel that hath not this in his heart: every man in Christ must be a new creature.

To encourage you in this work, consider,

1. It is by this you must know your *justification*. Justification is our blessedness; *Blessed is the man to*

whom the Lord will not impute sin, *Rom.* 4. 8. And this is the way to know our blessedness, forgiveness of sin precedes the inheritance, and both this and that are received only by the sanctified through faith in Christ; *That they may receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me, Acts* 26. 18. The alteration of our frame is *notius*, more discernable to us, than that of our relative states; the new creature dispositions discover what relation we stand in to God: this is a certain truth, he that does not find the draught of God's image in him, has no reason to conclude he has any saving interest in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer: as the blood and water were not separated in their effusion upon the cross, neither are they in their application to the soul; water to renew us, and blood to justify us; the *washing of regeneration* evidenceth our being justified by grace. The apostle infers the one from the other, *Tit.* 3. 5, 7.

2. Therefore *by the knowledge of this only* you can gain comfort. The great desire is, O that I were assured. Let it be your great business to clear up the new birth. It is the office of the Spirit, not only to comfort but renew, and to comfort by renewing: the hope of eternal life is founded upon the renewing of the Holy Ghost, as well as on justification by grace: the *spirit as a Comforter is to guide into all truth, into that truth which is sanctifying, 1 Tit.* 5. 7; *John* 16. 13; *John* 17. 17. The property of the Spirit is to guide us into sanctifying truth, and sanctify us by that truth; the Spirit does witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; its witness is by something within us, not without us: there must be something in our hearts as a foundation of this testimony; what witness can there be in an old nature? Look therefore after those essential properties of the new nature: Christ preached duty and comfort together; his first sermon, *Matt.* 5, is made up of both.

The clear evidence of a new life seated in the centre of the soul, will be a surer testimony of our right to, and fitness for glory, than if an angel from heaven should assure us in the name of God, that we are some of his heirs; the testimony of an angel is but that of a creature, lower than the verbal testimony of the Son of God. The evidences of the beginnings of glory, by the operations of grace, and a godlike nature, are more uncontrollable than the highest assurances all the angels in heaven can give us. Clear up this therefore. There are many counterfeits; men may take morality, outward reformation, heaps of religious duties, to be this work, but these are all insufficient, and men without good examination may cheat themselves, and take copper for gold, and tin for silver; there is a natural or moral integrity, and an evangelical integrity: the natural integrity, God owns in Abimelech; *Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart, Gen. 20.6.* He was king of the place where Abraham thought there was no fear of God, ver. 12. And it is likely there was not: God puts none of them upon prayer for themselves, but Abraham upon praying for them.

Then I ask, how stand your hearts to *God* and *sin*? Is there a bias in the will, which doth naturally carry it to God? What light is there in your minds? What flexibleness and tenderness in the will and conscience? What sprightliness in your affections to the things of God? What readiness to meet him in his motions to you? What closing with Christ? Are there strong cries, struggling, wrestling, Jacob-like prayers? A new-born babe not to cry; a child not to call to his father, and follow him and press to him! it is inconsistent with such a nature, since it is the first fruit of the *spirit of adoption*, received by us, to cause us to cry, *Abba, Father, Rom. 8. 15.* How stand your hearts to *sin*? are there deep humiliations for it, utter detestation of it? are your affections dead to the flesh and the world, and alive and quick to the

things of God? *The body is dead because of sin, and the spirit is life because of righteousness, Rom. 8. 10.* What humbling of inward pride, what striving against inward sins, what loathing of inward corruptions?

What *delight*, I ask again, have you in *spiritual duties*? Do your souls spring up in the service of your Lord? Are your hearts in heaven, before the words are out of your mouth? What is agreeable to nature, is not burdensome. Spiritual services are as pleasant to a new nature, as sin is to an old, as sweet wines and delicious food is to a gluttonous disposition. *How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psal. 119. 103:* Honey, one of the staple excellencies of Canaan, which is described to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Does your delight in the law of God spring up from the inner man? There is a delight in doing some things of the law? The Gentiles did by nature the things contained in the law, *Rom. 8. 22*, by a moral nature, not a new nature; if by nature they had then a delight in them, and it was as all delight is, inward in the soul and heart; no doubt but many of them had pleasure in their morality; that is not the meaning of the apostle; but he distinguishes his delights from theirs by the object of it, and by the subject or spring of it. It was the law of God, as it was the law of God, that he did delight in; and it was not only an inward delight, but a delight arising from an inner nature, a man distinct from that man composed of soul and body; it arose from a spirit possessed with nobler principles and higher ends.

Well then: is it your meat and drink to do his will? Has the glory of God been dearer to you than the dearest worldly concerns you have? Are your converses with him very delightful to you? Do the thoughts of God, and delights in him, frequently return upon you? What bears the most grateful relish in your souls, holy thoughts and duties, or sinful and foolish vanities?

Finally: Let me enquire *how do you live?* Have you another life, *by the faith of the Son of God?* Gal. 2. 20. Another faith beside the common faith, not resting in assent, but *working by love,* Gal. 5. 6. Do you live to yourselves? that is proper to a state of nature. Or do you live to God? that is proper to a state of grace, Gal. 2. 19. *I am dead to the law,* says the apostle, *that I might live unto God.* Is there a closing with Christ not only as your Saviour, but as the principle and end of your lives? Is there a living the life of God, the life of Christ? Can Christ be formed in the heart, and there be nothing of the qualities of Christ, nothing of the spirit of Christ? Is Christ formed in the heart, a hard, low, cold, dark, lifeless Christ? This frame is quite contrary to him. If we are born of the will of God, we are born to answer the will of God. Is it the will of God, that we should be loose in our hearts, and vain in our lives? That is the will of the flesh, not the will of God. According as our hearts are, so is our birth; sin or grace must have dominion in the soul; they cannot live amicably together; a man cannot be a sinner and a saint with the same will, cannot equally love holiness and iniquity; we may as well say, that a man may be in heaven and hell at the same time; not but that a renewed man may in a sudden fit do a thing against his nature, as Moses, one of a mild disposition, was transported with a strain of passion against his nature.

But if sin reigns in the heart, though it does not in outward acts; if we yield ourselves servants, to obey it in the lusts thereof, though not in the outward fruit of those lusts; this new creature-principle was never settled in the heart; *Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof, neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin,* Rom. 6. 12. He makes a manifest difference between the inward lust obeyed,

and the outward commission of it in the members, and places the reign of sin in one as well as the other; and ver. 16, concludes them in a state of nature or a state of grace, according as they yield themselves servants to this or that. A regenerate practical atheist, is just as true as to say a regenerate devil.

Be diligent observers therefore of what *solid alterations* you find in your spirits, what motions, starts, principles, ends, you can perceive there; and if you find you have this excellent and necessary new birth, admire God's grace in you, that he should pass by so many thousands in the world, and renew you; that he should leave many soaking in their sins, and swimming to destruction in their old nature, and bestow this heavenly plant upon your souls; and prize it too. Aquinas has an excellent saying, The good of one grace is greater than the good of all nature; which words Cajetan commends as fit to be writ upon our minds, and constantly reviewed by us, to raise our admirations of God and his grace.

PART VII.

REGENERATION TO BE SOUGHT.

Seeking it an indispensable duty—Necessary to all rational creatures—To neglect it is to act against reason—It is to despise the mercy and love of God—Reasons why we should seek it—Should be sought immediately—Early regeneration for the honour of God—For man's own interest—Deferring it is great folly—The attainment of it daily more difficult—Directions to attain it.

AND let me in the next place, exhort you to seek regeneration. *Seek* it. If it be necessary to be had, it is necessary to be sought. We are all at this present before God in an old or new nature; and if we die in the nature we have received from old Adam, without another from the new, it is as certain that every one of us shall be excluded from the kingdom of God, as it is certain we live and breathe in the places where we stand or sit. We are born of the earth; we must be born from heaven; we must have a spiritual as well as an animal life. Oh that every man and woman had the same thoughts of the necessity of it, as they have who are past hope in hell of ever attaining it! Riches are not necessary, honours are not necessary; this is of absolute necessity; were you like Solomon in all his glory, you could not have the

privilege of entering into God's kingdom without a new nature; but a new nature without the glory of Solomon, will admit you: If those that are already renewed must be every day *putting off the old and putting on the new man*,* Eph. 4. 22, 24; how much more need have you, who have not dropped one scale of the old man, nor have a grain of the new man in you? As original corruption stood up in the place of original righteousness; so a gracious regenerate frame, must rise up in the place of original corruption; for God will never befriend corrupt nature so much as to give a happiness to that which he hates. Men do not chuse weeds, but flowers, to plant in their delightful gardens. God indeed chuses weeds, but they are turned into the nature of flowers before he transplants them to glory: we must have a wedding-garment, to fit us for his feast; and oil in our vessels, to prepare us for his nuptials.

Seek it, for,

1. It is an *indispensable* duty. God has resolved, that only the *pure in heart shall see God*. It is a duty incumbent on us to love God; since we are bound to love God, we are bound to love whatsoever hath any relation to him. Therefore we must love ourselves, not with a sordid carnal love, but as we are the image of God: hence we are bound to do what we can to brighten and clear this image, and restore it to its primitive perfection in our souls. We are answerable to God for the presenting this image of God in the same state wherein it was, when he conferred it upon Adam, and upon us in his loins. Since the Redeemer hath undertaken to restore it, it is our duty to seek to this Redeemer for the restoration of it, for he came *that we might have life*, John 10. 16. A vital principle in us to fit us for eternal life; and to *have it more abundantly*, in a more glorious and fixed manner than Adam had.

2. Seek it, for something of this nature, or equiva-

* Burgess.

lent to it, seems *necessary* to all rational and intellectual creatures. The first nature of man was sown in mutability, and there was a necessity of something equivalent to this regeneration, to fix and establish his nature: as the confirmation of angels under the head Christ is in some sort a regeneration of them; for it is an alteration of their state, from mutable to immutable, not by nature, for so God only is immutable, but by grace; *He hath gathered together in one all things in Christ, Eph. 1. 10.* There is need now of it to change our nature, and afterwards to fix us in it. Most think that Adam, had he stood some time, had been confirmed in the state of innocency, and advanced to a more excellent state than that of paradise, which would have been an alteration of his state: if then an alteration of state was necessary for the fixing his happiness; an alteration of state is much more necessary for us for regaining the happiness we fell from.

3. Seek it, because in not seeking it, you act against *your own reason and natural experience*. You have by the light of nature, improved by the light of the gospel, so much knowledge as to perceive that you are not as God first made you; you cannot but acknowledge it impossible, that so impure and disorderly a piece can come out of his hands; that there is something wanting to you. And are those relics of nature left only to shew us our indigence, and not also to spur us on to seek a remedy? Melancthon saith, "I have seen many epicures who being in some grief for their sins, have argued, how can I expect to be received by God, when I find not a new light, and new virtues infused into me?" When you are stilled after the rage of carnal affections, or glut of pleasures, and you do in silence turn in upon yourselves, and make enquiry after your future state, if your consciences do not lie and flatter, will they not tell you to your faces, that you are men of death prepared against the day of slaughter? Besides, will

not every man confess in his most raised retirements, that he cannot find any real satisfaction in things below? And are there not sometimes some natural aspirings to something above these? Do not all men one time or other enquire, *Who will shew us any good?* Have you ever a more delightful pleasure, than when you find yourselves inflamed with some desires for it?

But alas! Do you not feel yourselves in a depraved state, and that these motions are but weak flutterings, and that the soul is quickly wearied in them? Is not this an evidence, that there must be a more vigorous nature infused both to attain and enjoy them? Is it not then an acting against your own sentiments, not to seek it? Do you not offer violence to your reason, to cut the wings of such motions? Let me add this too, you act in a way contrary to the nature of every thing, not to seek that state which was designed for the perfection of human nature? Is it not natural for every thing to endeavour its recovery to its primitive purity, and struggle under that which is preternatural to it? A fountain will not rest, till it hath wrought out the filth which hath been cast into it; so neither should man be quiet, till he recover himself from the dominion of sin in his nature, and his pollution by it? Are you contented with a nasty, impure, and diseased body? Are you not restless till it be cleansed and cured? And is it no trouble to you, to have your souls in a dirty and foul condition? Do you not hereby act against your own nature in other things?

4. Not to seek it, is to *despise* the general mercy of God, and the general kindness of the Mediator to human nature. There are in man desires for, and inclinations to happiness, and some knowledge that this happiness lies in God; these desires were left in man by the mercy of God upon the interposition of the Mediator; therefore some call them not relics of nature, but restored principles, as a foundation to work upon;

for upon the fall man did forfeit all, and sin despoiled him of all *de jure*, but by the mediation of Christ, those were left; *By him all things consist*, Col. 1. 17, otherwise there had been no stock to work upon. These are left as foundations upon which God grafts this grace of regeneration; * as they that spin do not spin out the whole thread, but leave some end, that they may add to it another thread; so God having a purpose to do good on man in renewing him, did not suffer the stock of nature to be wholly rooted out, but left that as a root to graft upon, to make him the better capable of happiness; had not man had a natural desire to happiness, there were no ground to work upon him to induce him to such a thing; therefore in not seeking it, you reproach God for leaving this stump in you; and seem to be so well pleased with corrupt nature, as if you would not have any remainder of the former. It is a striving against the relic of original nature left in us.

5. Seek it, for it is as necessary as *justification*. You should therefore seek it with as high an esteem of it as you have of pardon; there are none but would desire pardon of sin; you must be as desirous of the regeneration of your nature; they are equally necessary; those who will not have an inherent righteousness, can never expect an imputed righteousness from Christ, he never came to that end. Two things happened to us by the fall, by that event we were brought into another *state*, and another *nature*; the regaining of the former, must be equally sought with the latter, a being in another covenant by justification, and being beautified with another image, because naturally we are deformed by the image of Adam. As long as we are only in a state of descent from, and union with the first Adam, we are under the strictness of his covenant, and the deformity of his image; when we are united to the second Adam, and spiri-

* Stoughton's Righteous Man's Plea. Ser. 1. p. 30.

tually descend from him, we are in his covenant of grace, and are adorned with his image. Both therefore must be looked after as equally necessary; *That as sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. 5. 21*: let us then look after this reign of grace; let not that be the last, which should be first in our thoughts; since our natural descent from Adam, we are born God's enemies, we must be spiritually new-born before our enmity can expire.

6. The advantages that accrue by regeneration are high. When we are renewed; we part with impurity for purity, with dross for gold, with corruption for holiness, with flesh for spirit, with nature for grace, with sin for God, and the enjoyment of him for ever. Our present nature is a nature of death and bondage, a new nature is like the new law, a law of life and liberty. *James. 1. 25*. It will put our souls in order, and set the Israelite free from the Egyptian task-master; it will quell the rage of sin, and diffuse a serenity in our souls. Grace and peace are not unfitly joined together by the apostle, in respect of peace in ourselves, which cannot be without habitual grace; as well as peace with God, which cannot be without his favour. It will enable us to perform spiritual services; as all natural actions flow from a natural form in the creature, so all spiritual actions flow from a spiritual nature in the soul, and without it a carnal heart can no more do any spiritual work, than a rock can perform the work of a balsam-tree. It is but highly reasonable and just, we should endeavour to regain that state wherein we were created, as the best for us; since the estate wherein God created us, was certainly the best; it is inconceivably better to be a righteous man, than to be a man.

7. Seek it; you will never repent your *labour*, because it is necessary. Necessity makes us contend with the greatest difficulties; men will do more at a pinch, than they can do at other times, when no ne-

cessity is upon them; never did any repent of it, never any will; it has been a comfort upon a death-bed to all that had it, it never was any man's sorrow. The universal consent of all who have found it wrought, should quicken our desires and endeavours for it. Ask a renewed man, whether ever it troubled him that he was regenerate? Whether he would be without that state, rather than undergo the same pains again? Would not his answer be, No not for all the world? When the blessed apostle Paul considered his late regeneration, he expresseth it with some regret, *As one born out of due time*, 1 Cor. 15. 8. It implies a sorrow that he was not born sooner; and Austin cries out, *Sero te amavi Domine*; "I have loved thee too late, Lord:" so does every renewed man repent that he was not regenerate sooner. A regenerate man under the yoke of Christ, finds such a pleasure in it, such a suitableness, such an advantage to his interest, that he would not be free from those delightful engagements, and the sweetness of that yoke, for all the delights and commodities of the world.

Thirdly. Seek this great change immediately. Let not a minute pass without some ejaculation to God for the new birth; and when you come home, fall upon your knees, and rise not till you find a change of resolutions and dispositions: If you well understand the necessity of it, you would not be one hour without begging it. You have heard the necessity of it now, are you sure you shall ever hear the doctrine preached again? Are you sure you may not be past the hope, as well as the happiness of the new birth before many days be run, if the present opportunity be neglected? When God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and his family, it is said, *he did it that very day*, Gen. 17. 23, wherein God commanded him; why should you not imitate Abraham in the ready and speedy circumcision of the heart? Though God waits long, it cannot be

thought he should always be courting dead souls. It must be now; there is no hope of such a change after death; *The redemption of the soul ceaseth for ever*; no more under the offers of a redeeming Saviour, no more under the motions of a renewing spirit, *Psal.* 49. 8. Christ breaks the nations *like a potter's vessel*, *Psal.* 2. 9. A vessel before it be burned, may be macerated in water, and formed anew; but when it hath been burned in the furnace, it cannot be changed.

Well, if thou wilt be new born this day, God will bless the memory of this day; for he will gain a son; Jesus Christ will by his blood put this day in red letters in his calendar, for he will gain a brother; the Spirit will rejoice, for he will gain a temple; angels will rejoice, for they will gain a fellow-servant; you will gain a fitness for an everlasting inheritance. Let me therefore press young men and women to this necessary and important concern; I know not when I may have so fit an opportunity or subject for it: It is not said, except an old man be born again, but except *a man*; therefore be not careless, as if you were not concerned in it, nor put it off to a longer day, from the probability of the length of your life in a course of nature. Consider,

1. An early regeneration makes for God's honour, in *preventing* much sin. How ripe are young ones, yea, even children when they are scarce green in age, as though iniquity had been their tutor in the womb? Youthful blood is Satan's tinder. Job knew it; therefore when his sons feasted, he sacrificed; he was jealous of their inbred corruption, from the sense of the sins of his own youth, which we find him complaining of, *Job* 13. 26; therefore he feared his children, having the same temptations, might fall into the same transgressions. Now by an early regeneration, many diseases of the soul are prevented, as well as the great breach of nature cured; as the distempers of the body are prevented by altering the

habit of it in the spring. Though by a late regeneration, that of an old man, the soul is fitted for heaven, yet it will be grievous to him to think, that his former dishonouring of God in his natural state was not prevented. It is otherwise with the early regenerate, they cannot complain as Paul did, O how have I persecuted the church of God! How have I breathed out threatenings against Christ and his people! How have I wallowed in all kind of sin! They have indeed as much reason to complain of the stock of the old nature within them, but not of so many bitter fruits of the flesh as others. How does the devil hang the wing, when he is deprived of an active servant? As nothing makes heaven so glad, so nothing makes hell so sad, as to be frustrated of the full crop of sin it expected from such an instrument.

Early regeneration is for God's honour in doing *much service* for him. Young men are usually of active spirits, and vigorous affections, whereas age freezes all youthful warmth: such, like Peter, can gird themselves, and go whither they please, and travel about for God; but age damps the spirits. We are not so fit for service when the vigour of our youth is spent. And would you be saved, and God have no more glory from you? Now what parts, or strength, a young man has, grace will put into a right channel, and direct to an useful end. The early regenerate will be eminent in piety; for in the course of nature, they have a longer time to grow in; their faith and love, by a larger exercise, will be the stronger; and the stronger the grace, the more glory will be brought to God; *Abraham*, it is said, *was strong in faith, giving glory to God, Rom. 4. 20.* He that rises betimes in the morning, will do more work than he that lies in bed till noon, or loiters till the sun declines.

Early regeneration manifests the *power of the grace* of God. An early regeneration is the great ornament of the gospel. It evidenceth the dignity and strength

of habitual grace, in quenching youthful heats, and powerful temptations; in making such to deny themselves, and prefer God's precepts before their own pleasures: it magnifies grace, when the devil is beat upon his own dunghill, where he had so great an interest, by reason of the corruptions such are subject to. What an eulogy is it to the beauty and power of grace, to see a young flourishing plant in God's garden? It shows the power of his grace upon such to salvation, that they are strong in the power of the might of God, to wrestle against principalities and powers, as well as against flesh and blood. It manifests the power of God's grace in the work of faith, and that there is a spirit of power residing in them.

2. As an early regeneration makes for God's honour, so it makes for *your own interest*. Your new birth will be the *gentler*. The work of conscience will be more kindly, without the horrors they have, who have lain many years soaking in the old nature. More of hell must be flashed in an old sinner's face, to awaken him from his dead sleep. Paul, who had sinned some years with an high hand, was struck to the earth; Christ, as it were, took him by the throat, and shook him; *He trembling, and astonishing, said, &c. Acts 9. 6.* There will be more amazing aggravations of sin to rack the conscience, and consequently more anguish. Putrified wounds require more lancing; and therefore are more painful in the cure, than those which are but newly made. The more we are alienated from the life of God, the harder it will be to return to live that life again. The further a man is gone out of his road, the longer he must travel to come in again; and the more pains he must take in running or riding, than he that wandered but a little from it.

Your new birth being early, will be the more *grateful to God*. God loves the first fruits; he would not have the gleanings, but the first crop of every thing under the law, which was laid upon the

altar as God's portion. The kindness of the youth is most respected by God. He cherished Israel because they were the first fruits of his increase; *I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, Jer. 1. 1, 3,* under many discouragements. God writes down the time of the new birth, and it runs in his mind a long time after. Epenetus, the first fruits of Achaia, is saluted by Paul just after the salutation of the whole church, with the title of well-beloved; *Greet the church that is in their house; salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ, Rom. 16. 5.* And surely more beloved by the Lord than by the servant. God hath most affection for such as come in at the first sound of the gospel. Daniel was a young man, yet the holiest man of his age; and God hath so great an affection to him, that he joins him with Noah, that famous preacher of righteousness, and Job, that mirror of patience; *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness, Ezek. 14. 14;* as those that had the greatest power with him, to keep off judgments from the place where they were.

Comfort also will be the greater by an early new-birth. What a long time will such an one have to enjoy the comforts of the Spirit! whereas those that are renewed later, have fewer comforts, because their grieving the Spirit hath been the longer. You will be always ready and fit for the kingdom of God, let God call when he will; your foretastes of heaven greater, and much acquaintance with the life of it, before you arrive at the place of full enjoyment. John, the youngest disciple, lay in Christ's bosom; he had afterwards the most spiritual illuminations, and the discoveries of the whole state of the church in after ages, revealed to him. When our sluggishness makes God wait for our return, his justice will make us wait long for his comforts. The earlier your new-birth, the sweeter will be your death, as being more stored

with experiences of God's grace, and goodness, and truth, wherewith to answer all the devil's affrighting charges in your departing hence. No doubt can arise, but there will be a treasure of experiences whence to draw an answer. The longer acquaintance you have with God, and the longer likeness to him in your natures, the more joyful will be your passage to him, and the more confidence against the fear of death.

Further, The earlier your new birth, the *sincerer and stronger* will be your grace. To row against the strong stream and tide of nature, temptations of a youthful age, the inconstancy and lightness of your humour, and the inconsiderateness of your temper, are arguments of sincerity. To seek God, when a man hath fair and frequent invitations to sin, is not so liable to suspicion as when a man can live no longer; the latter proceeds rather from a fear of wrath, than love to their Creator, or affection to his glory. Grace will be the stronger, the more full of juice. He that is new-born betimes, when he is young, will grow to a greater stature, and a mighty strength in his age; for it is not with grace as it is with our bodies, the older the weaker; but *as the outward man decays, the inward man grows, and is renewed day by day*, 2 Cor. 4. 16. A young plant in the house of God, will be fat and flourishing, and full of fruit in old age, Psal. 92. 13, 14. The weakness of the body in such, is the youthfulness of grace.

Lastly. The earlier the new-birth, the *weightier will be your glory* in the kingdom of God. God rewards according to our works; *I will give to every one of you according to your work*, Rev. 2. 13. Not only to the wicked, the children of the woman Jezebel, according to their works, but to them whose charity, service, faith, patience, he knew, ver. 19. The longer you are without a new life, a vital principle, the fewer will your works be, and the shorter your wages. Though God in regeneration works as a Sovereign, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; yet, in rewarding, he acts as a righteous Judge, according to the rules

of justice, *2 Tim.* 4. 8; and so proportions the glory to every man's service. Young ones regenerate, that bear head against the temptations of their violent nature, shall have crowns set with more jewels; they shall not only have an entrance, but *an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet.* 1. 11. They shall enter into the port with a full gale.

The more violent storms they bear up against, the brighter will be their glory; for if he that endures temptation, but one temptation, shall have a crown, by proportion he that endures many, shall have a greater; *Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall have a crown of life, James* 1. 12. How comfortable will it be to feel the weight of your crown, and the richness of your robes, according to your years of service. If there be any sorrow in heaven, it is because they were not sooner new-born, that they might more have glorified God on earth, who bestows so much honour upon them in heaven. If any of you were sure to be regenerate, after you had spent so many years after the course of the world, and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh; yet how great would your loss be, both of the comforts of the Spirit in this life, and of degrees of glory in the other?

3. Deferring the seeking after this new-birth, till more years grow upon you, is a *mighty folly*. It is a matter of the highest concern, the greatest necessity, in comparison of which, all other things are but toys and superfluities. Is it not folly to prefer superfluous things before necessary? Is it not a madness for a man to be mending the mud-wall about his garden, and neglect to quench the fire which has got hold of his house? You are poisoned in your nature; you have plague-spots upon your hearts. Would it not be ridiculous for a man that has drunk poison, and spilt some upon his clothes, to be more careful to have stains fetched out of his garments, than the poison out of his stomach? You are careful about the concerns

of the body and flesh; O! be not such fools, as to let the poison within get the greater head, and the plague continue in the heart.

This is folly, because of the *uncertainty of life*. You are not lords and keepers of your own times; they are in God's hands; *My times are in thy hand, Psa. 31. 15.* What if he should fling that time out of his hand to morrow? what would your condition be? Those that are in a dead state now, as they are here, if judgment find them so, are irrecoverable. Because thou art a child of wrath, if he take thee thus away *with his stroke*, as Job speaks, then a *great ransom cannot deliver thee*. Hell followed death close at the back; *Rev. 6. 8.* Shall sin reign in a body? That is base; but in a mortal body, a body that may drop into the grave every hour? That is folly in the highest degree. It is the apostle's exhortation, *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, Rom. 6. 12.* Many a candle hath been put out before half burned: how often hath a clear sun in the morning, been overcast before noon? Were none of you the last week at the funeral of some strong and vigorous person? Perhaps there is no more time left you, than just what will serve for to seek this new birth. God seizes upon some suddenly, that they have not time so much as to cry out what aileth them; *They cry not when he bindeth them. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean, Job 36. 13, 14.* It is better to be new born many years too soon, if it can be supposed to be too soon, than to defer it one minute too late. He that defers the new birth to day, may not have a morrow to be new born in. And to be surprised by death before you are new born, better for you had you never been born at all.

It is folly to neglect this great work, because if you neglect the present time, though you may live, yet your return to God may be *very uncertain*. There is such a thing as a day of grace, shorter than the days of a man's life: *The things of their peace*

were then *hid from their eyes*, *Luke 19. 42.* though their destruction was deferred forty years. There is such a resolve in heaven sometimes, that the Spirit shall strive no longer with this or that man; *My Spirit shall not always strive with man, or in man; for that he also is flesh, Gen. 6. 3.* It is a threatening to those in the church, in opposition to the prophane world, ver. 2. The church began then to be corrupted. My Spirit shall not strive with them: Though they make a profession of me, and attend upon me in worship, yet they are flesh, degenerated into mere flesh, and flesh they shall be. And sometimes it is confirmed by a solemn oath. The angel swears in a most solemn manner, *by him that lives for ever, who created heaven and earth, &c. that there should be time no longer, Rev. 10. 5, 6.* that is, no time of repentance, as appears, if you refer it to *Rev. 9. 20, 21.* It is not therefore without great reason, that the apostle doubles both the notes of attention, *Behold*; and the time, *now, now*, when he exhorts them not to receive the grace of God in vain; that is, sit under the gospel-administration to no purpose, without having a gospel impression and signature upon their hearts. *Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. 6. 2.*

4. As it is a folly to neglect it, so if it be not presently sought, and endeavoured for, the more *difficult* it will be every day to attain it. First, in regard of the increase of *moral indisposition and unfitness.* It is true indeed, there is in every man a moral indisposition to a spiritual renovation; but the indisposition is greater, when the habits of sin are more than ordinarily strengthened. The more the soul is frozen, the harder it will be to melt. A body dead some few hours, is a subject more capable of having life breathed into it, than when it is putrified, and partly mouldered to dust. A young tree may more easily be taken up, and transplanted, than a strong old oak, which hath spread its roots deep into the earth. The more rooted the habit

of sin, the harder the alteration of the soul. Every sin in an unregenerate man, is an adding a new stone to the former heap upon the grave, to hinder his resurrection. It is a fetter and bond; *Bond of iniquity, Acts 8. 23.* And the more new chains are put upon thee, the more unable wilt thou be to stir. The habits of sin will become more connatural to the soul, and fortify themselves with new recruits.

The *industry* of Satan also increases the difficulty of salvation. If you remain in a state of nature till you are old, that devil which blinds you now, will have increased your blindness by that time: he will bestir himself in your age, that he may not lose that which he hath possessed so long. It is a shame for Satan, as well as for a man, *deficere in ultimo actu.* He that struck the first fatal blow to us, and occasioned this degenerate nature, will not want watchfulness and care to strengthen it in you: He will be diligent to keep up his own work: the longer his possession, the more difficult his departure. Judas was a devil in our Saviour's judgment all his time; *One of you is a devil, John 6. 70.* But when he had withstood the force of our Saviour's discourses, and nourished his covetousness against his Master's frequent convictions, the devil *entered into his heart, John 3. 17.* Perhaps there had been before, some strugglings of natural conscience in Judas as there may be in some of you; but when he had, against the sight of our Saviour's miracles, the hearing of his sermons, the checks of his own conscience, continued in a natural state, Satan enters into him in a more peculiar manner, in a way of more special efficacy: and by an uncontrollable power, breaks the bridle of conscience, which had held him in so long, and runs furiously with him to what wickedness he pleased. Satan reigned in him before: but as the regenerate being by degrees filled with spiritual gifts, and having additions of grace, are said to be *filled with the Spirit*; so natural men, as they increase in sin by degrees, are said to have a new entrance of

Satan into them, because there is an increase of his efficacy in them, and power over them, binding them in stronger chains and fetters of iron.

And let the subject be considered further with regard of *spiritual judgments*, which will make it impossible. Such judgments upon men that sit under the gospel, and admit not the influence of it, are more frequent than is usually imagined, though they are not so visible. Open sins, God punishes many times by visible judgments; but wilful unregeneracy by spiritual. Though a man may sit under the same means of grace which God blesses to regenerate others, they may be an accidental means to harden him. *The miry places shall not be healed, but be given to salt*, as it is, *Ezek. 47. 11*; when others shall grow like trees on both sides the river, and bear a never-fading leaf. If once your neglects and provocations put God to his oath, and make him *swear*, as he once did, that *you shall not enter into his rest*, his oath will be irreversible; heaven and earth shall pass away, before he will break it.

And that it may not be evaded, that this was an oath against the Israelites, it is intimated by the apostle that even in the times of the gospel, this oath is of force, ver. 12. He from thence exhorts them at that time, to take heed of *an evil heart of unbelief*. What need of this exhortation to them, if this oath did only concern the Israelites murmuring in the wilderness, and were not valid against unbelievers, and unregenerate men in the time of the gospel? It is a terrible place, that in *Isa. 6. 10*, *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*. Which dreadful place, is no less than six times quoted in the new testament, as though it belonged only to them that sit under evangelical light with a wilful unregeneracy.

Certainly as the mercies of the gospel are most spiritual, so the judgments inflicted upon the neglect-

ters of it, are the most spiritual judgments : Then a man is made the centre of divine fury, and his heart sealed up from any seizure by sanctifying grace ; *Because I have purged thee*, that is, offered thee purifying grace, *and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee*, *Ezek. 24. 13.* When God passes such a secret sentence, if all the men in the world, and all the angels in heaven, should with their most affectionate strains of reason, attempt the persuading of you, they were not able to open an heart which God has judicially locked up and sealed.

It is observed by some, that the work of the gospel, for conversion, is usually done in those places where it comes, in the space of seven years, as to those who have sat under it so long ; and they ground it upon, *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week*, *Dan. 9. 27* ; that is, one week of years. And that our Saviour preached three years and a half among the Jews, and the apostles three years and a half, or thereabouts, before the Jews were discovered. I will not affirm it positively ; but offer it, as worthy consideration, to those that have sat under the gospel more than seven years, without any renewing work on their souls.

Then, let me beseech you, resolve upon this work presently. We are not to bid a poor man *go away, and come again to-morrow* ; and shall we bid the Spirit, knocking at our hearts in the gospel, go away, and come again another time ? Our blessed Saviour did not defer his death for us till he was old ; and shall not we live to him till we are old ? As his death is an argument used by the apostle, to move us to live to him, so the time of his death should be an argument to us, to live to him betimes. How many has this foolish *to-morrow* deceived ? And how many have perished to day, before the dawning of to-morrow. Defer it not therefore a night longer : reflect upon yourselves, and say, Have I lived so long, pleased with

my old nature? O Lord! what had become of me, without thy wonderful patience? Let your motion be as the lightning, as the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the motion of four beasts, *Ezek.* 1. 14. God may make up the match between himself and you, before midnight: there was less time in God's working upon the jailor.

Do you ask, *What shall we do to get this new birth?* I answer, 1. Begin with *prayer*; seek it from that Saviour that first made so plain a declaration of it. *A man cannot receive any thing, unless it be given him from heaven*: then ask it from heaven; let God hear of you as soon as ever you get home.* God usually lets in renewing grace at the same gate at which honest prayer goes out. Prayer is a compliance with God's grace. He never refuses it to them that heartily desire it. Go therefore to God, give him no rest; if you do so, it may not be long before you will hear that joyful word drop from his gracious lips, *My grace shall be sufficient for you*; sufficient to renew you; sufficient to cure you.

Let the fervency of your prayers be proportioned according to the necessity of the thing, and the greatness of your misery without it. Plead therefore with God for it: Lord, is it not better to make me thy friend, than to let me continue thy enemy? Is it not more thy glory, to raise a soul from sin, than a Lazarus from the grave? Thy power and mercy are more illustrious in turning a dry stock into a fruitful and flourishing tree. Overcome therefore my base nature, by thy merciful power; change me from a venomous, to a dove-like nature. Oh, how fain would I glorify thee, by answering the end of my creation! Glorify thyself by new-creating my heart, that I may glorify thee in a newness of life. I cannot get a new heart by my own strength; but it is a work not too hard for thy power, and suitable to thy promise.

* Jackson, vol. 3. chap. 28. p. 496, 497.

Plead the promise, *I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh, Ezek. 11. 19; and, A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, Ezek. 36. 26; but he will be enquired of, to do it for them, ver. 37.* Breathe and aspire after it; beg for it as earnestly as you would in extreme hunger, for food for the satisfaction of your natural appetite: God will not deny it to such as breathe after it: *Hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled, Mat. 5. 6.* Beg the operation of the Spirit. Our Saviour provided the remedy, but left the Spirit to apply it. He provided the colours to draw his image; but none but the Spirit can lay them on. Ask therefore the Spirit of the Father in the name of Christ. The Father sends him into the world, and sends him into the heart, but only in the name of Christ. It is called a holy Spirit, because without it there can be no holy nature.

2. Be deeply sensible of the *corruption of nature.* The more we are sensible of our inherent depravation, the more we shall breathe after a real change. Can he ever imagine the necessity of a cure, who understands not the greatness of his disease? Be fully convinced, as Paul was, that in you, that is, *in your flesh, dwells no good thing, Rom. 7. 18. I know, I am experimentally sensible of it.* Did we but truly see the defilement of our nature, and the monstrous alteration of it from that of our creation, as we can the deformity of some monster in the world, we should loathe ourselves, we should fly, if we could, from our own nature, and send forth nothing but groans for deliverance from the body of death, and have no rest till we were stripped of so abominable a frame. Let us therefore turn in upon ourselves, take a view of our condition, see if there be any suitability between our depraved natures and the glory of another world. There is not, unless we conceit heaven a place filled only with carnal pleasures. But

reason will tell us the contrary ; and a carnal soul can never, in that state, be fit for spiritual glory.

3. View often the *perfection of the law of God*. This will make us sensible of the contrariety of our nature to God's holiness, and consequently, make us look about for a remedy. See whether your nature answers the exactness of the law : for although you were alive without the law, yet when the commandment and your hearts were come to look upon one-another, you will see sin in its life and power, and all the conceits of your own excellency will die. *For I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died, Rom. 7. 9.* Paul thought himself a righteous person, till he came to measure himself by the exact and spiritual image of the law. He had been instructed in the literal knowledge of the law ; for he was brought up a pharisee : his head and the law were acquainted ; and then he thought himself a living person : but when his heart and the law came to be acquainted, then he found himself dead, and his high opinion of himself fell to the ground.

Consider then, how the law requires a perfect righteousness, an inward principle. All duties it commands, are not only to be done materially, but formally ; for they are so commanded, in such a manner, from such a principle, to such an end. Then reflect ; have I such a righteousness ? Can I answer the law ? Do I come up to the measures of it in any one action ? Surely I do not. Then consider further, does not this law stand ? will God lay it in the dust ? has he cast it away ? Surely it is *holy, just, and good* ; and therefore a standing rule. I must have a principle suitable to that which Jesus Christ came not to destroy, but establish. How shall I do it with this corrupt nature, wherein I do not one action that does sincerely respect it, as the law of God, that is accompanied with a delight in it ? Certainly this temper, so contrary to the law, must be changed. I must

have an inner man to delight in this law ; a principle that must in some measure, though imperfectly, suit it. This orderly consideration, would put you upon the seeking out for such a righteousness, as may in part answer it.

4. Observe *the motions of the Spirit*. There is an assisting work of the Spirit, and an informing work. There is not a man but has, or once had, the strivings of this Spirit with him. There are the knockings of Christ by his Spirit at the door : there are calls ; *Zacheus, come down ; this day is salvation come to thy house*. Did you never hear a voice from heaven saying, *Come to me, that ye may have life* ? Did you never hear a groan from heaven, *When shall it once be* ? Did you never see a tear trickling down the cheek of Christ, as when he wept over Jerusalem ? Did you never hear a sigh of a grieved Spirit waiting upon you ? Can you see, and hear, and hear again, yet no compliance, when that is of absolute necessity you are exhorted to ? Smother not those motions ; answer them with suitable affections. If Christ looks upon you, as he did upon Peter, think of what you are, and weep. If the Spirit calls, answer presently, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*. The neglect of the time of the Spirit's breathing, is the cause of a continuance of unregeneracy. Repel not those sweet motions that strike upon your hearts.

5. Attend diligently upon *all means of grace*. They are the pipes through which the Spirit breathes ; the lungs of the Spirit, the instruments whereby our natures are altered. *Faith comes by hearing*. It is by the hearing of faith, that the Spirit is ministered. *He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, doth he it by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith* ? *Gal. 3. 5*. None can expect it, who will not use the means to have it, no more than men can expect to live without eating and drinking. Would we be warm ? we must approach to the fire : would we be clean ? we must wash in the water : would we be

renewed? we must attend upon the breathings of the Spirit in the institutions of God. This we may do, though we cannot renew ourselves: we may read the word, as well as a piece of news; we may hear the word and attend to it, as well as to any worldly concern; we may meditate upon it, and consider it, as well as a story. This we have power to do, and it is by the word that this great work is done. By a powerful word, Christ called Lazarus out of the grave; and by his word spoken by his Spirit, his great Deputy he sent after him, he calls us out of our state of death. Beg of the Spirit to breathe upon you, before you come to attend upon his institutions. We profit little by the word, and our old nature attends us, because we take no notice of the Spirit of God, who is appointed the principal officer in this business. It is he that is to guide us into truth, *John* 16. 13. Though men may speak truth to us, yet the Spirit can only guide the truth into our hearts, and guide us into the heart of truth, to taste the marrow of it.

6. I might add, *study* the gospel. Look upon Jesus Christ in that glass: this transforms us into his image: as beholding the light of the sun in a glass, paints an image of that light in our faces; so does the beholding Christ in the gospel. *But ye all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, 2 Cor.* 3. 18. The gospel is the cause of our first change, and of our growth in it; *from glory to glory*; but by the Spirit of God in the gospel; *As by the Spirit of the Lord.* Study the promises of the gospel, and the end of the blood of Christ which was to purge our conscience from dead works: it is by believing the promises of pardon in the blood of Christ, that the *conscience is purged from dead works, Heb.* 9. 14.

THE
NATURE
OF
REGENERATION.

2 Cor. 5. 17.

THEREFORE IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE: OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY, BEHOLD, ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW.

PART I.

GENUINE CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECTS OF AN
INWARD CHANGE.

*General introductory remarks—Division of the text—
The difficulty of describing regeneration—Differs
from conversion—From justification—From adop-
tion—From sanctification—Regeneration removes
not the old substance or faculties of the soul—Not a
change of acts essential to the soul—Not an excita-
tion or awakening of hidden, or dormant principle—
Not an addition to nature—Not baptism.*

THE apostle in those words, *For whether we be be-
sides ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is
for your cause*, ver. 13, defends his speaking so much of
his integrity; though some men would count him out

of his wits for it, yet he regards not their judgment; for if he were in an extacy, or besides himself, his purpose was to serve God and his church, and therefore he did not regard the opinion of men, whether he were accounted mad or sober, so he might perform the end of his apostleship. The sense therefore of it, as Calvin renders it, is this: Let men take it as they will, that I speak so much of my integrity, I do it not upon my own account, but have respect to God and the church in speaking of it, for I am as ready to be silent as to speak, when my silence may glorify God and advantage the church as much as my speech. *For the love of Christ constrains me*, ver. 14, for whom I am bound to live; and so he passes on to inculcate the duty of every man that has an interest in the death of Christ. *The love of Christ constrains us* actively; the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, is a powerful attractive to make us live to him. It is the highest equity and justice, that we should live to him who died for us. Whence observe:

The true consideration and sense of the love of Christ in his death, has a *pleasing force*, and is a *delightful bond and obligation* upon us, to devote ourselves wholly to his service and glory. There is a moral constraint upon the soul to this end; *If one died for all, then were all dead*, then all were obnoxious to eternal death. Others* dislike this interpretation, and understand it not of the death to God, brought in by the *first Adam*, but a death to sin and the flesh, procured by the *second Adam*, which death is spoken of, *How shall we being dead to sin, &c. Rom. 6. 2*, and called *a suffering in the flesh, and a ceasing from sin*, 1 *Pet. 4. 1*. If one died for all, then all for whom he died are dead, *jure and obligatione*, dead to themselves, that they might not be under their own power, but the power of him that died for them, and rose again: since therefore we are dead to sin, we

* Vorstius, Calvin.

should take no care to maintain the life of it. And this seems by the following verse to be the true meaning of it; *And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again*, ver. 15. He hath redeemed us by the price of his blood, that he might have us in his own power, as his own property; so that we are no longer our own masters, and have no longer right to ourselves.* They ought to die to themselves, that they may live to Christ; it being fit they should live, not to their own wills, or own honour, but to the glory and will of their Redeemer. It was to this end that Christ died, that he might have a seed to serve him, and live to him. It is ingratitude and injustice to deny him our service, since thereby we endeavour to frustrate the design of his coming, and the end of his death. Observe,

1. *Self* is the chief end of every natural man. *That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.* Implying, that all men living, who are not under the actual benefit and efficacy of our Saviour's death, live to themselves. The greatest distinction between a regenerate and a natural man is this, self is the end of one, and Christ the end of the other. The life of a natural man, and all the dependencies of it, is to gratify corrupt self, with the greatest detriment to his natural and moral self, the happiness and good of his soul: but the life of a new creature, with all the dependencies of it, is for the glory of God, and the Redeemer. This self-dependence, and a desire of independency on God, which was the great sin of Adam, whereby he would make himself his own chief end, has run and still runs in the veins of all his posterity, and is the bitter root upon which all the fruits of gall and wormwood grow.

2. The *end* of our Saviour's dying and rising again, was to change the corrupt end of the creature. The

* Calvin.

end of redemption, and consequently the end of the Redeemer, must be contrary to the end of corruption, and the end of the first Adam. As Adam dispossessed God of his dominion, to set up self; so doth Christ pull down self, to advance God to his right of being our chief end. It is called therefore a redemption of us to God: *For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; Rev. 5. 9.* Redeemed us from a slavery under sordid lusts, to God as our end.

3. Therefore we must be taken off from ourselves, as our end, and be fixed upon another, even upon *Christ*. Else we answer not the end of Christ's death and resurrection: *he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, 1 Pet. 2. 24.* And if the ends of our Saviour's death and resurrection be not accomplished upon us, the fruits of it shall not be enjoyed by us. The whole work of regeneration, and conversion, and sanctification, and the efficacy of the death of Christ in the soul, consists in these two things: A taking us off from self, and fixing us upon God and Christ, as our end. The *terminus a quo*, is self; the *terminus ad quem*, is Christ. We are *redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers, 1 Pet. 1. 18;* even from our first father Adam. This is properly to set up no other Gods before him, and to abhor the grossest idolatry.

4. It is *highly equitable*, that if Christ died for us, and was raised for us as our happiness, we should live to his glory, and make him our end in all our actions, and the whole course of our lives. The apostle uses this consideration as an argument, and as a copy and exemplar. As Christ died not for himself, nor rose again for himself, but died for God's glory and our redemption; to vindicate God's righteousness, and justify us in his sight; and rose again to make it appear, that he had done our business in redeeming

us, and went to heaven to manage our cause for us : so we are to live to keep up the honour of God's righteousness and holiness, and to justify Christ in our professions of him; and conformity to him in the design of his death and resurrection. It is a degradation of ourselves, not to live to Christ, which is both a more rightful and a more satisfying object of our affections, who returns our living to him, with a happiness to ourselves. By his dying he purchased a dominion over us ; by his resurrection his dominion over us was confirmed, and thereby our obligation of love and service increased. He died as our surety to satisfy our debts ; and rose as our Saviour to justify our persons ; so the apostle, *He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification, Rom. 4. 25.* Therefore as he rose to justify us, we must rise to glorify him. And indeed it is a great sign of a spiritual growth, when we grow in our ends and aims for God.

5. The *resurrection* of Christ, as well as his death, was for us. *He rose again*, it must be understood, for them for whom he died ; he died as a public person, bearing our sins ; and rose again as a public person, and head of the believing world, acquitted from our sins ; *He is entered into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. 9. 24.* And in a conformity to these two public acts of Christ, does our regeneration and communion with Christ consist, in a mortification of the body of sin in conformity to his death ; in newness of life, by quickening grace in conformity to his resurrection, *Coloss. 2. 12.*

The apostle proceeds, and makes his inference in the 16th verse. *Henceforth know we no man after the flesh ; yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.* To know, is used in scripture for love and delight ; both on God's part ; *The Lord knows the way of the righteous, Psal. 1. 6,* that is, loves and delights in the way of the righ-

teous ; and on man's part, *No knowledge of God in the land*, *Hos.* 4. 1, that is, no love of God. Not to know men after the flesh then, is either not to judge of men according to the endowments, though never so glittering, which arise only from fleshly principles ; to esteem no man according to his greatness, his knowledge and worth in the account of the world ; or, not to love men for our secular interest ; or, not to regard men according to those fleshly privileges of circumcision and carnal ceremonies. Not ourselves, which is included in *no man* ; not to esteem of ourselves by our knowledge, wealth, credit, honour, or any other excellency which falls under the praise of men ; but by inward grace, living to God, fruitfulness to him, which falls under the praise of God.

Men esteem not their fields for the gay wild flowers in them, but for the corn and fruit ; *yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.* We do not glory in him, because he was of kin to us, and our countryman according to the flesh. We look upon him no more, only as a miraculous man ; but we have more noble thoughts of him, we know him as the great Redeemer of the world. We consider him in those excellent things he hath done, those excellent graces which he hath communicated, those excellent offices he exercises ; we know him after a spiritual manner, as the author of all grace, appointed by God for such ends ; accepted by God upon such works, glorified by God for such purposes, we regard him as transacting our great affairs in heaven, *where he is entered as a forerunner for us*, *Heb.* 6. 20, and as such we serve and honour him ; we desire not his company in the flesh, but in the Spirit, in his heavenly appearance and glory.

Observe.—1. Natural men have no delight in any thing but *secular concerns*, love nothing, but for their own advantage ; admire not any true spiritual worth ; they know and love men ; yea, what love they pretend

to Christ, is only a fleshly love ; a love from education ; a customary love.

2. An evidence of being taken off from ourselves, and living to Christ, is our *valuation either of ourselves or others according to holiness*. Though a civil respect be due to men according to their station in the world ; such a respect the writer of this epistle gave to Agrippa ; yet our inward valuations of men ought to be upon the account of the image of God in them. God, who loves righteousness, knows no man after the flesh, but as he finds the image of his own righteousness in him. And as a new creature is framed after the image of God ; so his affections and valuations of men or things, are according to God's affections to them, or esteem of them.

3. Our professions of Christ, serving him and *loving him barely for ourselves*, and for carnal ends, does not consist with regeneration. Such a love is a love to ourselves, not to Christ ; a making him only subservient to us, not ourselves subservient to Christ.

4. We should eye Christ, and arise to the knowledge of him, *as he is advanced and exalted by God*. Look upon him as our head, delight to come under his wing, and have our whole dependence on him, know him in his righteousness to justify us, know him not only as a Saviour risen, but in the *power of his resurrection* in our souls, *and the fellowship of his sufferings*, and to be made *conformable to his death*, *Phil. 3. 8, 9, 10*. Such a knowledge the apostle aims at ; the other knowledge, is a knowledge of him in the head ; this a knowledge of him in the heart ; the other is a knowledge of him after *the flesh*, this a knowledge of him *after the Spirit*, in the draught of Christ in our hearts by the Spirit ; an inward conception of him in the womb of our hearts.

The text is another inference made from that position, ver. 15. If there be such an obligation upon us to *live to Christ*, because he has died and rose again for

us ; then certainly whosoever has an interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, as to the fruits of it, must be a new creature, a changed person ; old things are passed away, all things are become new in him. Whosoever is in the kingdom of Christ, engrafted into him, under the participation of his death and resurrection, is a *new creature*. All other excellencies are defective, though they may be useful to the world ; It is a *new creation* only makes a man excellent and worthy of the kingdom. *Old things are past away* ; old affections, old dispositions of Adam ; those things, the ἀρχαῖα, things that are very near of as old a standing as the world. Adam would be his own rule and ruler, he would be the rule of good and evil to himself, he would be his own end ; these things must pass away, we must come to a fiduciary reliance upon God, under the new head of his appointment, and make him our highest good, our chief end, our exact rule. And therefore what is called the *new creature*, Gal. 6. 15, is called, *faith working by love*, Gal. 5. 6.

Adam's great failures were unbelief and self-love ; he would not believe God's precept and threatening ; he would not depend upon God ; to this is opposed faith, which is a grace that empties us of ourselves, and fixes us in our dependence on another. He would also advance himself and be his own rule and end, to know as God ; to this is opposed love, which is an acting for God and his glory. And these two are the essential parts of the *new creature*. Some of late would understand by the new creature, only a conversion from idolatry to the profession of christianity. But there must be a greater import in the words than so. The apostle makes it a qualification necessary both to Jew and Gentile ; that neither the circumcision of the one did avail without it, nor the uncircumcision of the other prejudice them that possess it. Besides, men may turn from one profession to another, without living to God, and directing all their actions to the glory of Christ. Some translate it, *let him be*

a new creature; others, *he is a new creature*; one notes his state, the other his obligation. *Old things are passed away*; it is a reason rendered, there is a change in the whole frame of things.

If you understand it of the old economy, the old legal state; then it is an argument showing the necessity of the new creature. Old things are withered, there is a new frame in the church, in the kingdom; therefore there ought to be so in the subjects of it: for the prophets use to speak of the state of the gospel under the names of a *new heaven and new earth*, *Isa.* 65. 17. As old rites in the church are removed, so the old principles and the old frames of Adam should pass away: the old rubbish must be thrown out, when the house is new built. And they are passed away in a regenerate man, *jure, obligatione; potestate*; though not wholly *in actu*. *All things are become new*, but not of ourselves, but by the grace of God; *And all things are of God*, ver. 18. It is likely the apostle expresses himself thus, to pull down the swelling thoughts of the Corinthians which they had of themselves; they were proud of their gifts, wherein by the apostle's own confession, they came *behind no church in the world*; and he discourses to them much of the excellency of charity, above knowledge, and adviseth them to *covet the best gifts*; he depresses their confidence in knowledge without grace, which doth but puff up, not edify to eternal life, *1 Cor.* 1. 7. & *2 Cor.* 13. He wishes them therefore to look more to the new creature in them; to try themselves whether they be in Christ or no, by the change they found in their hearts. *If any man be in Christ*, that is, be a member of Christ, engrafted into him.

In the words observe,—1. The *character* of a true christian, by his state, *a new creature*. 2. The *necessity* of this new creation: *if any man*; if he be not a *new creature*, he is not in Christ, he has nothing at present to do with him, he is no true member of his body. 3. The *universality*: *any man*; not a man can

be in Christ by any other way, without this new creation pass upon him. 4. The *advantage* of it: if he be a new creature, he is certainly in Christ, it is an infallible token, that the Redeemer did die and rise again for him. 5. The nature of it. *Removal* of the old form: *old things are past away*. And the *introduction* of a new: *all things are become new*, as without in the church, so within in the soul. 6. The *note of attention*: *behold*; more particularly set to this passage, of all things becoming new, to remove the deceit that men are liable to. *Old things* in some measure may pass away, but look to that, whether *new things* come in the place contrary to those old, whether there be new affections, new dispositions; old things may pass away, when old sins are left, and no new frames be set up in the stead of them.

The doctrine I shall insist upon; is this: every man in Christ hath *a real and mighty change wrought in him*, and becomes a new creature.

I fix upon these words to show the *nature* of regeneration, the necessity of which I have already discoursed of. It is difficult to describe exactly the nature of regeneration, because of the *disputes* about it; * whether it be quality, or a spiritual substance; whether, if a quality, it be a habit, or a power, or whether it be the Holy Ghost personally. Many controversies the wits of men have obscured it with. The scripture discovers it to us, under the terms of the *new creature*, a *new heart*, a *law put into us*, the *image of God*, a *divine nature*; these, though scripture terms, are difficult to explain.

It is difficult, because it is visible, not *in itself*, but *in its effects*. We know seed propagates itself, and produces its like, but the generative part in the seed lies covered with husks and skin, so that it is hard to tell in what atom or point the generative particle lies. We know we have a soul, yet it is hard to

* Baxt. Rest, part 1. chap. 3, 6, 7.

tell what the soul is, and in what part it principally resides. We know there are angels, yet what mortal can give a description of that glorious nature? It is much like the wind, as our Saviour describes it; *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit,* John 3. 8. The wind, we feel it, we see the effects of it, yet cannot tell how it arises, where it reposes itself, and how it is allayed: and all the notions of philosophy about it, will not satisfy a curious enquirer; so likewise it is in this business of regeneration; the effects of it are known; there are certain characters whereby to discern it; but to give a description of the nature of it, is not so easy.

It is difficult, because of the *natural ignorance* which is still in the minds of the best. A man cannot understand all iniquity, for there is a mystery of iniquity; neither can he fully understand this work, for there is a *mystery of godliness*; not only in the whole scheme of it without, but in the whole frame of it in the heart. It is called, the *hidden man of the heart*, 1 Pet. 3. 4; hidden from the world, hidden from reason, hidden from the sight sometimes of them that have it: a man can hardly sometimes see it in his own heart, by reason of the streams of corruption; as a beautiful picture is not visible in a cloud of smoke. The blindness the god of this world hath wrapped us in, that we might not know God, or the things of God, is not wholly taken off. And even what we know of the truths of God, suffers an eclipse by our carnal conceptions of them; for all the notions we frame of them have a tincture of sense and fancy.

It is hard for those to conceive it, who have *no experience of it*. If we speak of the motions of natural corruption, as wrath, passion, distrust of God, and enormous sins, men can easily understand this; because we have all sad experiments of an inward cor-

ruption; but the methods and motions of the Spirit of God in this work, are not comprehended, but by those that have felt the power of it. The motions of sin are more sensible, the motions of the Spirit more secret and inward, and men want as much the experience of the one, as they have too much of the other. Hence it is that many carnal men love to have the nature of sin discovered; partly, perhaps, for this reason among others, that they can better understand that by the daily evidence of it in their own practices; whereas other things, out of the reach of their experience, are out of the grasp of their understanding; and therefore seem to them paradoxes and incredible things; the spiritual man is not judged or discerned by any, but them that are spiritual. *1 Cor. 2. 15.*
 * It is certainly true, that as a painter can better decipher a stormy and cloudy air, than the serenity of a clear day, and the spectator conceive it with more pleasure; so it is more easy to represent the agitations and affections of natural corruption, than the inward frame of a soul wrought by the Spirit of God. I shall therefore describe it consonantly to the scripture thus;

REGENERATION IS A MIGHTY AND POWERFUL CHANGE, WROUGHT IN THE SOUL BY THE EFFICACIOUS WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHEREIN A VITAL PRINCIPLE, A NEW HABIT, THE LAW OF GOD, AND A DIVINE NATURE ARE PUT INTO AND FRAMED IN THE HEART, ENABLING IT TO ACT HOLILY AND PLEASINGLY TO GOD, AND TO GROW UP THEREIN TO ETERNAL GLORY.

This is included in the term of a new creature in the text. There is a change, a creation, that which was not, is brought into a state of being. If a new creature, and in Christ, then surely not a dead but a living creature, having a principle of life; and if a living creature, then possessed of some power to act, and

* Moulin. Sermon. Decad. 1. Ser. 7. p. 130, 131.

habits to make those actions easy: and if a power to act, and a habit to facilitate that act, then a law in their nature as the rule of their acting; every creature hath so; in this respect the heavens are said to have ordinances; *Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?* And they seem to act in the way of a covenant, *Jer. 33. 25*, according to such articles as God has fixed upon. And lastly, as in all creatures thus endued, there is a likeness to some other things in the rank of beings: so in this new creature there is a likeness to God, whence it is called the image of God in holiness and righteousness, and a divine nature. So that you see the divers expressions whereby the scripture declares this work of regeneration, are included in this term of the *new creature*, or the new creation, as the word is *καινή κτίσις*. It is a certain spiritual and supernatural principle, or permanent form, *per modum actus primi*, infused by God, whereby it is made partaker of the divine nature, and enabled to act for God.

Let us therefore see, how it differs from other states of a christian. What it is *not*. What it is.

First. How it differs from the other states of a christian.

1. It differs from *conversion*. Regeneration is a spiritual change, conversion is a spiritual motion. In regeneration there is a power conferred; conversion is the exercise of this power. In regeneration there is given a principle to turn; conversion is our actual turning; that is the principle whereby we are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace: and conversion the actual fixing on God, as the *terminus ad quem*. One gives *posse agere*, the other *actu agere*.

Conversion is related to regeneration, *as the effect to the cause*. Life precedes motion, and is the cause of motion. In the covenant, the new heart, the new spirit, and God's putting his *Spirit within them*, is distinguished from their *walking in his statutes*, from the first step we take in the way of God, and is set

down as the cause of our motion : *I will cause you to walk in my statutes, Ezek. 36. 27.* In renewing us, God gives us a power : in converting us, he excites that power. Men are naturally dead, and have a stone upon them : regeneration, is a rolling away the stone from the heart, and a raising to newness of life ; and then conversion is as natural to a regenerate man, as motion is to a living body. A principle of activity will produce action.

In regeneration, *man is wholly passive* ; in conversion, he is *active* : as a child in its first formation in the womb, contributes nothing to the first infusion of life ; but after it hath life, it is active, and its motion natural. The first reviving of us, is wholly the act of God, without any concurrence of the creature ; but after we are revived, we do actively and voluntarily live in his sight ; *He will revive us, he will raise us up, and then we shall live in his sight*, then we shall walk before him, then shall we *follow on to know the Lord, Hos. 6. 2.* Regeneration is the motion of God in the creature ; conversion is the motion of the creature to God, by virtue of that first principle ; from this principle all the acts of believing, repenting, mortifying, quickening, do spring : in all these a man is active ; in the other merely passive ; all these are the acts of the will, by the assisting grace of God, after the infusion of the first grace : conversion is a *giving ourselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. 8. 5* : giving our own selves to the Lord is a voluntary act, but the power whereby we are enabled thus to give ourselves, is wholly and purely in every part of it from the Lord himself. A renewed man is said to be *led by the Spirit, Rom. 8. 14* ; not dragged, not forced ; the putting a bias and aptitude in the will, is the work of the Spirit quickening it ; but the moving the will to God by the strength of this bias, is voluntary, and the act of the creature. The Spirit leads as a father does a child by the hand ; the father gave him that principle of life, and conducts him and hands him

in his motion ; but the child has a principle of motion in himself, and a will to move. The day of regeneration is solely *the day of God's power*, wherein he makes men *willing* to turn to him, *Psa.* 110. 3. So that though in actual conversion, the creature be active, it is not from the power of man, though it be from a power in man ; not growing up from the impotent root of nature, but settled there by the Spirit of God.

2. It differs from *justification*. They agree in the term to which, that is God : by justification we are reconciled to God ; by regeneration we are assimilated, made like to God. They always go together. As our Saviour's resurrection, which was the justification of him from that guilt which he had taken upon himself, and a public pronouncing him to be his righteous servant, is called a new-begetting him ; *God hath raised up Jesus again*, *Acts* 13. 33, as it is also written in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* : Because it was a manifestation of him to be the Son of God, who before, being covered with our infirmities, did not appear so to the world : so our justification from guilt, and new begetting us, and manifesting us to the angels, to be the sons of God, are at one and the same time, and both are by grace ; *by grace* you are justified, *Rom.* 5. 1 : the quickening and raising us together with Christ is *by grace*, *Eph.* 2. 5, 6. The blessing of Abraham, which is the application of redemption from the curse of the law, and the receiving the promise of the Spirit by faith, are both together, *Gal.* 3. 14.

3. It differs from justification in the *nature of the change*.

Justification is a *relative* change, whereby a man is brought from a state of guilt, to a state of righteousness ; from a state of slavery, to a state of liberty ; from the obligation of the covenant of works, to the privilege of the covenant of grace ; from being a child of wrath, to be an heir of promise. Regenera-

tion is a physical change, and real, as when a dead man is raised from death to life; it is a filling the soul with another nature; *And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2. 1.* The translators have inserted those words, *hath he quickened*, because those words are put in the 5th verse, but I think the words refer better to the 23d verse of the first chapter, speaking of Christ, *who fills all in all*, and fills you too with a spiritual life; or he passes from the power of God in raising Christ, to his power in raising us. It is a change of nature, and of that nature whereby we are *children of wrath*, not only by the first sin, but by a conversation according to the course of the world. And this quickening respects the change of that nature which was prone to a worldly conversation, and a fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

The first is a change of a man's condition, this a change in a man's disposition, When a man is made a magistrate, there is a change in his relation; when a servant or slave is made a free man, there is an alteration of his condition; but neither the magistracy of the one, nor the liberty of the other, fills their hearts with new principles, or plants a new frame in their nature. Relation and nature are two distinct things. In creation there is a relation of a creature to God, which results from the mere being of the creature; but there is also the nature of the creature in such a rank of being, which is added over and above to its mere being. The apostle, in the verses following the text, speaks of reconciliation, or non-imputation of our trespasses, as distinct from that change wrought in us in the new creation. In justification, we are freed from the guilt of sin, and so have a title to life; in regeneration we are freed from the dominion of sin, and have the purity of God's image in part restored to us.

Regeneration and justification differ in the *cause*, and *other ways*. Justification is the immediate fruit of the

blood of Christ *Being justified by his blood, Rom. 5. 9.* Regeneration is by the immediate operation of the Spirit, therefore called; *sanctification of the spirit, 2 Thes. 2. 13*: the matter of that is without us, the righteousness of Christ; the matter of the other within us, a gracious habit: the form of the one, is imputing; the form of the other, is infusing or putting into us: they differ in the end; one is from condemnation to absolution; the other from pollution to communion. In the immediate *effect*, one gives us a right, the other a fitness. In their *qualities*, the righteousness of one is perfect in our head, and imputed to us. The righteousness by regeneration is actively in us, and aspires to perfection.

3. It differs from *adoption*. Adoption follows upon justification, as a dignity flowing from union to Christ, and does suppose reconciliation. Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, regeneration the nature of sons. Adoption relates us to God as a father; regeneration engraves upon us the lineaments of a father. That makes us relatively his sons by conferring a power, *John 1. 12*; this makes us formally his sons by conveying a principle, *1 Pet. 1. 23*. By that we are instated in the divine affection; by this we are partakers of the divine nature. Adoption does not constitute us the children of God by an intrinsic form, but by an extrinsic acceptance; but this gives us an intrinsic right; or adoption gives us a title, and the Spirit gives us an earnest; grace is the pledge of glory. Redemption being applied in justification, makes way for adoption.

Adoption makes ways for regeneration, and is the foundation of it. *God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal. 4. 5. And ver. 6, because you are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Because you are thus adopted, God will make you like his Son, by sending forth the Spirit of his Son, to intimate, the

likeness it shall produce in the hearts of men to Christ, that you may cry, *Abba, Father*, behave yourselves like sons, and have recourse to God with a child-like nature. The relation to Christ as brethren is founded upon this new creature; *For both he that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one*, Heb. 2. 11; they are all of one nature, not the divine nature which Christ had by eternal generation, but that divine nature Christ had by the Spirit's unction. And being of one nature, *he is not ashamed*, though glorious in heaven, *to call them brethren*; and being Christ's brethren by a divine nature, thence results also the relation of the sons of God.

4. It differs from *sanctification*. Habitual sanctification indeed is the same thing with this new creature; as habitual rectitude was the spiritual life of Adam: but actual sanctification, and the gradual progress of it, grows from this principle as from a root. Faith purifies the heart; *Purifying their hearts by faith*, Acts 15. 9; and is the cause of this gradual sanctification; but faith is part of this new creature, and that which is a part cannot be the cause of the whole, for then it would be the cause of itself. We are not regenerated by faith, though we are sanctified by faith; but we are new created by the Spirit of God, infusing faith into us. Faith produces the acts of grace, but not the habit of grace, because it is of itself a part of this habit; for all graces are but one in the habit or new creature; charity, and likewise every other grace, is but the bubbling up of a pure heart and good conscience, 1 Tim. 1. 5. Regeneration seems to be the life of this gradual sanctification, the health and liveliness of the soul.

The second thing proposed, is, *what it is not*.

1. It is not a removal or taking away of the *old substance or faculties* of the soul. Some thought that the substance of Adam's soul was corrupted when he sinned, therefore suppose the substance of his soul to be altered when he is renewed. Sin took not away

the essence, but the rectitude; the new creation therefore gives not a new faculty, but a new quality: the cure of the leprosy is not a destroying of the fabric of the body, but the disease: yet in regard of the greatness of man's corruption, the soul is so much changed by these new habits, that it is as it were a new soul, a new understanding, a new will. It is not the destroying the metal, but the old stamp upon it, to imprint a new: human nature is preserved, but the corruption in it expelled. The substance of gold is not destroyed in the fire, though the metal and the flame mix together, and fire seems to be incorporated with every part of it: but it is made more pliable to what shape the artist will cast it into, but remains gold still: It is not the breaking the candlestick, but setting up a new light in it; not destroying the will, but putting a new bias into it. It is a new stringing the instrument, to make a new harmony. It is an *humbling the loftiness, and bowing down the haughtiness* of the Spirit, to *exalt the Lord alone* in the soul, speaking of the times of the gospel, *Isa. 2. 11.* The essential nature of man, his reason and understanding, are not taken away, but rectified. As a carver takes not away the knots and grain in the wood, but planes and smooths it, and carves the image of a man upon it, the substance of the wood remains still; so God pares away the rugged pieces in man's understanding and will, and engraves his own image upon it; but the change is so great, that the soul seems to be of another species and kind, because it is acted by that grace, which is another species from that principle which acted it before.

New creation is called a resurrection. Our Saviour in his resurrection, had the same body, but endued with a new quality. As in Christ's transfiguration, *Matt. 17. 2*;* neither his deity nor humanity were altered, both natures remained the same. But there

was a *metamorphosis*, and a glorious brightness conferred by the deity upon the humanity, which it did not partake of before. So though the essence of the soul and faculties remain the same; yet another kind of light is darted in, and other qualities implanted. It was the same Paul when he complied with the body of death, and when he complained of it, but he had not the same disposition. As Adam in a state of corruption, had the same faculties for substance, which he had in the state of innocence; but the power, virtue, and form in those faculties, whereby he was acceptable to God, and in a capacity to please him, was wholly abolished. *We lose not our substantial form, as Moses's rod did when it was turned into a serpent; or the water at Cana when it was turned into wine. Our nature is ennobled, not destroyed; enriched, not ruined; reformed, not annihilated.

2. It is not a change of the *essential acts* of the soul, as acts: the passions and affections are the same, as to the substance and nature of the acts; but the difference lies in the object. And acts, though for substance the same, yet are specifically distinguished by the diversity of objects about which they are conversant. Whatsoever is a commendable quality in nature, and left in man, by the interposition of the Mediator, is not taken away; but the principal end and objects of those acts, arising from those restored qualities, are altered. †The acts of a renewed man, and the acts of a natural man, are the same in the nature of acts: as when a man loves God, and fears God; or loves man, or fears man, it is the same act of love, and the same act of fear; there are the same motions of the soul, the same substantial acts simply considered; the soul stands in the same posture in the one as in the other; but the difference lies in the objects; the object of the one is

* Daille Sermons.

† J. Goodwin.

supernatural, the object of the other natural. As when a man walks to the east, or west, it is the same motion in body and joints, the same manner of going; yet they are contrary motions, because the terms to which they tend, are contrary one to the other: or, as when we bless God and bless men, it is with one and the same tongue that we do both; yet these are acts specifically different, in regard of the difference of their objects. The nature of the affections still remain, though not the corruption of them; and the objects to which they are directed are different.

If a man be given to thoughtfulness, grace removes not this temper, but turns his meditations to God. The solitariness of his temper is not altered, but something new offered him, as the object of his meditation. If a man be hot and earnest in his temper, grace takes not away this heat, but turns it into zeal to serve the interest of God. Paul was a man of an active disposition; this natural activity of his disposition and temper was not dammed up by grace, but reduced to a right channel, and fixed upon a right object: as he laboured more than any in persecuting, so afterwards *he laboured more than any* in edifying, 1 Cor. 15. 9, 10. His labour was the same, and proceeded from the same temper, but another principle in that temper, and directed to another term. As it is the same horse, and the same mettle in the beast, which carries a man to his proper stage, that carried him before in a wrong way, but it is turned in respect of the term. David's poetical fancy is not abolished by this new principle in him, but employed in descanting upon the praises of God, which otherwise might have been lavished out in vanity and guilt. So that the substance and nature of the affections and acts of a man remain: but anger is turned into zeal, by virtue of a new principle, grief into repentance, fear into the fear of God, carnal love into the love of the Creator, by another principle which gives a bias to those acts.

3. It is not an *excitation*, or *awakening* of some *gracious principle* which lay hid before in nature, under the oppression of ill habits; as corn laid under the chaff, but was corn still. Not a beating up something that lay secreted in nature; not an awakening, as of a man from sleep; but a resurrection, as of a man from death; a new creation, as of a man from nothing. It is not a stirring up old principles, and new kindling of them; as a candle put out lately, may be blown in again by the fire remaining in the snuff, and burn upon the old stock; or as the life, which retired into the more secret parts of the body, in those creatures that seem dead in winter; which is excited, and called out to the extreme parts, by the spring sun. Indeed there are some sparks of moral virtues in nature, which want blowing up by a good education; the foundation of these is in nature, the exciting of them from instruction, the perfection of them from use and exercise.

But there is not in man the seed of one grace, but the seeds of all sin: *I know, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing, Rom. 7. 18.* Some good thing may be in me, but it arises not from my flesh; it is not from any seed sown by nature; but it is another principle put into me, which seminally contains in it all grace; it is a putting a new seed into the soil, and exciting it to grow; *An incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. 1. 23.* Therefore the scripture does not represent men in a trance, or sleep, but dead: and so it is not only an awakening, but a quickening, a resurrection. *Eph. 2. 5. Col. 2. 12. Eph. 1. 19, 20.* We are just in this work, as our Saviour was when the devil came against him; *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me, John 14. 30.* He hath nothing to work upon in Christ. But he rakes in the ashes of our nature, and finds sparks enough to blow upon: but the Spirit finds nothing in us but a stump, some confused desires for happiness; he brings all the fire from heaven wherewith our

hearts are kindled. This work therefore is not an awakening of good habits, which lay before oppressed, but a taking off those ill habits, which were so far from oppressing nature, that they were conatural to it, and by incorporation with it, had quite altered it from that original rectitude and simplicity wherein God at first created it.

4. Nor is it an *addition* to nature. Christ was not an addition to Adam, but a new head by himself, called Adam, in regard of the agreement with him in the notion of an head and common person. So neither is the new creature, or Christ formed in the soul, an addition to nature. Grace grows not upon the old stock. It is not a piece of cloth sowed to an old garment, but the one is cast aside, the other wholly taken on; not one garment put upon another, but a taking off one, and a putting on another, *Putting off the old man, putting on the new man, Col. 3. 9, 10.* It is a taking away what was before; *Old things are passed away*; and bestowing something that had no footing before. It is not a new varnish, nor do old things remain under a new colour; it is a *new* creature, not a *mended* creature. It is called light, which is not a quality added to darkness, but a quality that expels it: It is a *taking away the stony heart, and putting an heart of flesh in the room, Ezek. 36. 26.* The old nature remains, not in its strength with this addition, but is crucified; and taken away in part with its attendants; *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, Gal. 5. 24.* As in the cure of a man, health is not added to the disease; or in resurrection, life added to death; but the disease is expelled, death removed, and another form and habit set in the place. Add what you will, without introducing another form, it will be of no more efficacy, than flowers and perfumes strewed upon a dead carcase, can restore it to life, and remove the rottenness. Nothing is the *terminus a quo*, in creation: it supposes nothing before, as a subject capable:

nothing in a natural man, is a subject morally capable to have grace, without the expulsion of the old corrupt nature. It is called *a new creature*, a new man; not an improved creature, or a new dressed man.

5. It is not *external baptism*. Many men take their baptism for regeneration. The ancients usually give it this term. One calls our Saviour's baptism, his regeneration *. This confers not grace, but engages to it: outward water cannot convey inward life. How can water, a material thing, work upon the soul in a physical manner? Neither can it be proved, that ever the Spirit of God is tied by any promise, to apply himself to the soul in a gracious operation, when water is applied to the body. If it were so, that all that were baptized were regenerate; then all that were baptized would be saved; or else the doctrine of *perseverance* falls to the ground. Baptism is a means of conveying this grace, when the Spirit is pleased to operate with it. But it does not work as a physical cause upon the soul, as medicine does upon the humours of the body: for it is the sacrament of regeneration, as the Lord's supper is of nourishment.

As a man cannot be said to be nourished without faith, so he cannot be said to be a new creature without faith. Put the most delicious meat into the mouth of a dead man, you do not nourish him, because he wants a principle of life to concoct and digest it. Faith only is the principle of spiritual life, and the principle which draws nourishment from the means of God's appointment. Some indeed say, that regeneration is conferred in baptism upon the elect, and exerts itself afterwards in conversion. But how so active a principle as a spiritual life, should lie dead and asleep so long, even many years which intervene between baptism and conversion, is not easily conceivable.

* Clem. Alex. *Pedagog.* lib. 3. cap. 6. p. 68.

PART II.

THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.

Regeneration is a change—A real change—Common to all christians—Contrary to the former frame—Extends to the whole man—Principally an inward change—Of principle—Of motive—Of thoughts—Of comforts—It is an outward change—In its objects—In its operations.

THIRDLY, **LET** us now see what regeneration is positively.

I. It is a *change*; and as to the *kind* of it, it is, 1. a *real* change; real from nature to grace, as well as by grace. The term of creation is real: The form introduced in the new creature is as real as the form introduced by creation into any being. Scripture terms manifest it so. *A divine nature, the image of God, a law put into the heart*, they are not nominal and national: It is a reality the soul partakes of; it gives a real denomination, *a new man, a new heart, a new spirit, a new creature* *, something of a real existence; it is called a resurrection; *The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live, John 5. 25.* If Christ had said only, that the hour *shall* come, it had been meant of the last resurrection; but saying,

* Moulin.

that it was already come, it must be meant of a resurrection in this life. There is as real a resurrection of the soul, by the trumpet of the gospel, accompanied with the vigorous efficacy of the Holy Ghost, as there shall be of bodies by the voice of the Son of God, at the sound of the trumpet of the archangel. All real operations suppose some real form whence they flow : as vision supposes a power whereby a man sees, and also a nature wherein that power is rooted. The operations of a new creature are real, and therefore suppose a real power to act, and a real habit as the spring of them. It is such a being, that enables them to produce real spiritual actions ; for the *spirit of power* is conveyed to them ; whereby as when they were out of Christ, they were able to do nothing ; so now being in him, they are able to *do all things*.

2. It is a change common to *all the children of God*. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature* : Every man in Christ is so. It is peculiar to them, and common to all of them. The new creation gives being to all christians. It is a new being settled in them, a new impress and signature set upon them, whereby they are distinguished from all men, barely considered in their naturals. As all of the same species have the same nature ; as all men have the nature of men, all lions the nature of lions ; so all saints agree in one nature : the life of God is communicated to all, *whose names are written in the book of life*. All believers, those in Africa, as well as those in Europe ; those in heaven, as well as those on earth, have the same essential nature and change. As they are all of one family, all acted by one spirit, the heart of one answers to the heart of another, as face to face in a glass. What is a spirit of adoption in them below, is a spirit of glory in them above ; what in the renewed man below, is a spirit crying, *Abba Father* ; that is in them above, a spirit, rejoicing in *Abba Father* : the impress and change is essentially the same, though not the same in degree.

3. It is a change quite *contrary to the former frame*. What more contrary to light than darkness? Such a change it is, instead of a black darkness, there is a bright light, *Eph. 5. 8.* As contrary as flesh and spirit; *that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, John 3. 6.* Where both are put in the abstract, one is the composition of flesh, the other of Spirit: as contrary as east to west; as the seed of the woman to the seed of the serpent; as the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. The frame of the heart before the new creation, and the frame of the heart after, bears as great a distance from one another as heaven from earth. As God and sin, are the most contrary to one another; so an affection to God, and an affection to sin, are the most contrary affections. It is quite another bent of heart, as if a man turn from north to south. It is a position contrary to what it was: the heart touched by grace, stands full to God, as before to sin; it is stripped of its perverse inclinations to sin, clothed with holy affections to God: he abhors what before he loved, and loves what before he abhorred: he was alienated from the life of God, but now alienated from the life of his lusts: nothing would before serve him, but God's departure from him; nothing will now please him, but God's rays upon him. He was before tired with God's service, now tired with his own sin. Before crucifying the motions of the Spirit, now crucifying the affections and lusts. That which was before his life and happiness, is now his death and misery; he disaffects his foolish pastimes and sinful pleasures, as much as a man does the follies of his childhood; and is as cheerful in loathing them, as before he was jolly in committing them.

It is a translation from one kingdom to another; a translation *from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, Colos. 1. 13.* Μετεστησε, a word

taken from the transplanting of colonies ; they are in a contrary soil and climate, they have other works, other laws, other privileges, other natures ; as Christ's resurrection was a state quite contrary to the former ; at the time of his death, he was in a state of guilt, by reason of our sin ; at his resurrection he is freed from it ; he was before made under the law, he is then freed from the curse of it ; he was before in a state of death, after his resurrection in a state of life, and lives for ever. God pulls out *the heart of stone*, that hatred to him and his service ; and plants a *heart of flesh* in the room, a pliability to him and his will, *Ezek. 36. 26.* It is as great a change, as when a wolf is made a lamb, that wolfish nature is lost, and the lamb-like nature introduced. * By corruption, man was carnal and brutish ; by the new creation he is spiritual and divine ; by corruption he hath the image of the devil ; by this he is restored to the image of God ; by that he had the seeds of all villainies ; by this the roots of all grace ; that made us fly from God, this makes us return to him ; that made us enemies to his authority, this subjects us to his government ; that made us contemn his law, this makes us prize and obey it. *Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir-tree ; and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle-tree, Isa. 55, 13,* and God will preserve it from being cut off ; speaking of the time of redemption.

4. It is a universal change of *the whole man.* It is a new creature, not only a new power, or new faculty : this, as well as creation, extends to every part, understanding, will, conscience, affections, all were corrupted by sin, all are renewed by grace. Grace sets up its ensigns in all parts of the soul, surveys every corner, and triumphs over every lurking enemy ; it is as large in renewing as sin was in defacing. The whole soul shall be glorified in heaven ; therefore the

* Sabunde tit. 275. p. 585.

whole soul shall be beautified by grace. The beauty of the church is described in every part, *Cant.* 4. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

1. This new creation bears *resemblance* to creation and generation. God in creation creates all parts of the creature entire. When nature forms a child in the womb, it does not only fashion one part, leaving the other imperfect; but labours about all, to form an entire man: the Spirit is busy about every part in the formation of the new creature. Generation gives the whole shape to the child, unless it be monstrous. God does not produce monsters in grace; there is the whole shape of the new man. You mistake much, if you rest in a reformation of one part only; God will say, such a work was none of my creation. He doth not do things by halves.

2. It bears *proportion* to corruption: as sin expelled the whole frame of original righteousness; so regenerating grace expels the whole frame of original corruption. It was not only the head, or only the heart, only the understanding or only the will, that was overcast with the blackness of sin; but every part of man lost its original rectitude. Not a faculty could boast of itself, like the Pharisee, and say, it was not *like this* or that *publican*; the waves of sin had gone over the heads of every one of them. Sin, like leaven, had infected the whole mass: Grace overspreads every faculty to drive out the contagion. Grace is compared to light, and light is more or less in every part of the air above the horizon, for the expulsion of darkness when the sun arises. The Spirit is compared to fire, and therefore pierceth every part with its warmth, as heat diffuses itself from the fire to every part of water. The natural man is denominated from corruption, not an old understanding, or an old will, but the *old man*, *Eph.* 4. 22. So a regenerate man is not called a new understanding, or a new will, but a *new man*, *Eph.* 4. 24.

3. The proper seat of grace is the *substance* of the

soul, and therefore it *influences every faculty*. * It is the form whence the perfection both of the understanding and will do flow; it is not therefore placed in either of them, but in the essence of the soul. It is by this the union is made between God and the soul; but the union is not of one particular faculty, but of the whole soul. *He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit*; it is not one particular faculty that is perfected by grace, but the substance of the soul. Besides, that is the seat of grace which is the seat of the Spirit; but this or that particular faculty is not the seat of the Holy Ghost, but the soul itself, whence the Spirit rules every particular faculty by assisting grace, like a monarch in the metropolis sending orders to all parts of his dominions. It is the heart to which the Spirit is directed in his commission to us. The Spirit is said to *dwell in a man*, Gal. 4. 4. Rom. 8. 9, in the whole man, as a soul does in the body, in forming every part of it; if it dwelt only in one faculty, there could be no spiritual motion in the other; the principles in the will would contradict those in the understanding; the will would act blindly, if there be no spiritual light in the understanding to guide it: the light of the understanding would be useless, if there were no inclination in the will to follow it; and grace in both those faculties would signify little, if there remained an opposing perversity in the affections. The Spirit therefore is in the whole soul, like fire in the whole piece of iron, quickening, warming, mollifying, making flexible, and consuming what is contrary; like Aaron's ointment, poured upon the heart, and thence runs down to the skirts of the soul.

4. Therefore there is a gracious *harmony* in the whole man. As in generation two forms cannot remain in the same subject; for in the same instant wherein the new form is introduced, the old is cast out: so at the first moment of infusing grace, the

* Suarez, de gra. l. 6. c. 12. Numb. 13, 14.

body of death has its deadly wound in every faculty, understanding, will, conscience, affection. The rectitude reaches every part; and all the powers of the soul, by a strong combination, by one common principle of grace acting them, conspire together to be subject to the law of God, and advance in the ways of holiness, *Psal.* 119. 10, it is with *the whole heart* that God is sought. In the understanding there is light instead of darkness, whereby it yields to the wisdom of God, and searches into the will of God; *the spirit of the mind is renewed*, *Eph.* 4. 23. In the will there is softness instead of hardness, humility instead of pride, whereby it yields to the will of God, and closes with the law of God. In the heart and conscience, there is purity instead of uncleanness, whereby it is purged from dead works, settled against the approbation of sin, and a resolution to be void of offence, *Heb.* 9. 14. *Acts* 24. 16. In the affections there is love instead of enmity, delight instead of weariness, whereby they yield to the pleasure of God, have flights into the bosom of God; *O how love I thy law! it is my delight day and night.* The memory is a repository for the precepts and promises of God, as the choicest treasure. It is a likeness to Christ; the whole human nature of Christ was holy, every faculty of his soul, every member of his body, his nature holy, his heart holy. If we are not so formed, Christ is not formed in us: look therefore whether your reformation you rest in, be in the whole, and in every part of the soul.

5. It is principally an *inward* change. It is as inward as the soul itself. Not only a cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, a painting over the sepulchre, but a casting out the dead bones, and putrified flesh; of a nature different from a pharisaical and hypocritical change, *Mat.* 23. 25, 26, 27. It is a *clean heart* David desires; not only clean hands, *Psa.* 51, 10. If it were not so, there could be no outward

rectified change. The spring and wheels of the clock must be mended, before the hand of the dial will stand right. It may stand right two hours in the day, when the time of the day comes to it; but not from any motion, or rectitude in itself. So a man may seem by one or two actions, to be a changed man; but the inward spring being amiss, it is but a deceit. Sometimes there may be a change, not in the heart, but in the things which the heart was set upon, when they are not what they were: as a man whose heart was set upon uncleanness, change of beauty may change his affection; the change is not in the man, but in the object. But this change I speak of, is a change in the mind, when there is none in the object; as the affection of a child to his trifles, changes with the growth of his reason, though the things his heart was set upon, remain in the same condition as before.

1. As an inward change it must be a change of *principle*. The principle of a natural man in his religious actions, is artificial; he is wound up to such a pitch, like the spring of an engine, by some outward respects which please him; but as the motion of the engine ceaseth, when the spring is down, so a natural man's motion holds no longer than the delight those motions gave him, which first engaged him in it. But the principle in a good man is spirit, an internal principle; and the first motion of this principle is towards God, to act from God, and to act for God. He fetches his fire from heaven, to kindle his service: an heat and *fervency of spirit* precedes his *serv'ing the Lord*, Rom. 12. 11. There may be a serving God from an outward heat, conveying a vigour and activity to a man; but the new creature serves God from inward and heated affections. Examine therefore, by what principles do I hear, and pray, and live, and walk? For all acts are good or evil, as they savour of a good or bad root, or principle in the heart. The two princi-

ples of the new creature, are faith and love. What is called the new creature, *Gal. 6. 15, is called faith working by love, Gal. 5. 6.*

The first principle of the new creature is *faith*. Faith is a part of this new creature. The new creature itself is the prime root of all motion. This is the first discovery of all spiritual life within us; and therefore the immediate principle of all spiritual motion. A splendid action without faith, is but moral; whereas one of a less glittering, is spiritual with it. The new creature being begotten by the seed of the word, and having thereby an evangelical frame, hath therefore that which is the prime evangelical grace, upon which all other graces grow; and consequently all the acts of the new creature spring from this principle immediately; viz. faith in the precept, as a rule; faith in the promise, as an encouragement; faith in the Mediator, as a ground of acceptation. Therefore if we have not faith in the precept, though we may do a service not point-blank against the precept, yet it is not a service according to a divine rule; if we have not faith in the promise, we do it not upon divine motives; if we act not faith in the Redeemer, we despise the way of God's ordaining the presentation of our service to him. All those that you find acting from faith, *Heb. 11*, had sometimes a faith in the power of God, sometimes in the faithfulness of God; but they had not only a faith in the particular promise, or precept, but it was ultimately resolved into the promise of the Messiah to come. *Those all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, &c. ver. 14.* The performance of particular promises, they had received; but not the performance of this grand promise; but that their faith respected: they as new creatures, did all in observance of God promising the Mediator: and we are to do all in observance of God sending the Mediator, being persuaded of the agreeableness of our services to him, upon the account of the command; and of the accep-

tion of our services by him upon the account of the Mediator. This put a difference between Paul's prayer, after the infusion of grace into him, and before ; so that our Saviour sets a particular emphasis upon it, *Behold he prays, Acts 9. 11.* Paul, no doubt, had prayed many times before his believing, but nothing of that kind was put upon the file, as a prayer ; before they were prayers of a self-righteous pharisee, but these of an evangelical convert ; these were prayers springing from a flexibility to Christ, a faith in him ; from a *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?*

The other principle of the new creature is *love*. There are many principles of action, hope of heaven, fear of hell, reputation, interest, force of natural conscience, some of those are inward, some outward, which are the bellows that blow up a man to some fervency in action ; but the true fire that contributes an heavenly frame to a service, is the love of God. The desire of the heart is carried out to God ; his heart draws near to God, because his sole delight is in God, and his sole desire for him ; *Whom have I in heaven but thee, Psal. 73. 25.* Then verse 28, *But it is good for me to draw near to God.* This choice affection in the new creature, spirits his services, makes his soul spring up with a wonderful liveliness. The new creation is the restoration of the soul to God from its apostacy ; a casting down those rebellious principles which contended with him, and reducing his affections to the right centre : and when all the lines meet here in one centre, in God, all the returns to him flow from this affection. It is but one thing settled in the soul, as the object of its earnest desire ; and that should be the spring of all its inquiries and actions, the *beholding the beauty of the Lord, Psal. 27. 4.*

Things may be done out of a common affection ; as when a man will raise a child fallen into the dirt, out of a common tenderness ; but a father would raise him with more natural affection, which is a sphere above that common compassion. Every affection

therefore, is not the renewed principle, but a choice affection to God. This is a mighty ingredient in this change, and doth difference the new creature from all others. One acts out of affection to God, the other out of affection to self. Men may be offended with sin because it disturbs their ease, health, estate, &c. He may pray and hear merely out of a respect to natural conscience; but now can these be the acts of the new creature, when there is no respect to God in all this? But a new creature would quench the fire of corrupt self-love, to burn only with a spiritual and divine flame; he depresses the one to exalt the other, and would be disengaged from the burdensome chains of self-love, that he might be moved only by the spiritual charms of the other purer affection; it is a death to him have any steams of self-love rise up to smoke and black a service.

2. This inward change is a change of *end*, as well as principle. The glory of God is the end of the new creature, self the end of the old man. Before this new creation, a man's end was to please self; now his end is to please God. A man that delights in knowledge to pleasure his understanding, and for self-improvement, when he becomes a new creature, though his desire for knowledge is not removed, yet his end is changed, and he thirsts after knowledge, not merely to please his inquisitive disposition, but to admire and praise God, and direct himself in ways agreeable to him. As the end of the sensualist, is to taste the sweetness in pleasure; so the end of a renewed man, is to know more of God, to taste a sweetness in him, and in every religious duty. This is the distinguishing character of the new creature. This design for the glory of God, was not to be found among any of the heathens, who were so great admirers of virtue. Most of them intended only an acquiring a reputation among their countrymen; and though some of them might esteem virtue for its native dignity, yet this was to esteem it by the moiety of it,

when they referred it not to the honour of God, from whence it flowed to the world.

Man was not created for himself, and to be his own end; he therefore that chiefly aims at his own satisfaction in any thing, is not a new creature; he hath his old deformed end into which he sunk by the fall. But grace carries a man higher, and reduceth all to God, and to his well-pleasing. The apostle desires they may be *filled with the knowledge of the will of God, that they may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well pleasing, Col. 1. 9, 10.* The very first motion of this new principle is towards God, to act for God: as the first appearance of a living seed in the ground, is towards heaven; thither it casts its look, from whence its life came. What the new creature receives, is from God; *They received it as the word of God;* and therefore what he doth is for God, *1 Thes. 2. 13.*

1. The principal intent of God in the new creation, is for *himself.* *I will sow her to me, Hos. 2. 23.* Speaking of the church in the time of the gospel; not to sin, not to the world, not for herself; but *I will sow her to me.* Husbandmen sow the ground for themselves, for their own use, to reap the harvest; and the corn grows up to the husbandman that sowed it. What the seed doth naturally, the new creature doth intentionally, grow up for God. Since the new creature is a divine infusion, it must needs carry the soul to please God, and aim at his glory. God would never put a principle into the creature, to drive it from himself, and conduct it to his own dishonour; this consists not with God's righteousness; this would be a deceit of the creature. It is impossible, but that which is from God in so peculiar a manner, and with gracious intentions to restore the creature to his happiness, must tend to the advancement of God. Where there are no aims at the divine glory, there is no divine nature, nothing in the soul that can claim kindred with God. Regeneration is a forming the soul for *God's self,* and to *shew forth his praise, Isa.*

43. 21. Hence they are said to be a *peculiar people*, in respect of their end, as well as their state, Certainly that man, who makes not God his pattern and his end, that doth not advance the praise and glory of God, was never new formed by him. What comes from God, must naturally tend to him, Is it possible, that the living image of God should disgrace the original? that a divine impression should be unconcerned in the divine honour?

2. The new creation is an evangelical impression, and therefore *corresponds in its intention with the gospel*, This is the instrument whereby the new creature was wrought; and this was appointed and published for the glory of God; *Glory to God in the highest, Luke 2. 14.* It is to promote holiness in the creature, which is the only way whereby we can honour God; this is the prime lesson the grace or gospel of God teaches; *To live godly, Tit. 2, 12*; to live to God. What therefore is produced by the efficacy of such an instrument, cannot but aim at the glory of God, which was intended in it; otherwise the gospel would work an effect contrary to itself, which no instrument produces, when managed by a wise agent; and contrary to the end of the agent too; viz. the Spirit of God, whose end is to *glorify Christ. He shall glorify me. John 16. 14.* The frame and acts of a renewed man, are like the grain or seed of the word sown in the heart. Nothing the gospel designs more than the laying self low, even as low as dust and death. The first lesson is self-denial. It is in self that the strength and heart of the body of sin and lust lies; and it is the principal end of the gospel, to bring the creature to sacrifice self-love to righteousness, self-interest, self-contentment, wholly to God, and his law, and his love, that God may be all in all in the creature. Before the heart was touched with the gospel, it had not the least impulse to bring forth the virtues and excellencies of God into the world; but when it is changed, it is filled with zealous

desires to have his name exalted upon an high throne among men.

3. A new creation is the bringing forth the soul in a *likeness to God*. The end, therefore of the new creature is the glory of God. As God is the cause, so he is the pattern of the new creature, according to which he frames the soul ; it is *after God, created in righteousness, &c. Eph. 4. 24*. There can be no likeness to God, where the creature dissents from him in the chief end. Without such an agreement, there can be nothing but variance between God and the creature ; all the commotions and quarrels upon earth, are founded upon the difference of ends. God aims at his own glory ; so does the new creature ; otherwise it would be possible he should walk with God, or follow him as a dear child. It consists also in a likeness to Christ ; his resurrection is the pattern and cause of our regeneration ; *Ye are risen with Christ, Col. 3. 1*. What, to contrary ends ? Did Christ rise only to live to himself ? No, but to live to God, as the great end for which he was appointed Mediator. Did he design to glorify God on earth, and does he live to dishonour God in heaven ? No, he lives to the same end there, for which he lived and died here. Our spiritual resurrection, is not only a restoring us to a spiritual life, but to the ends of this life, a living to God and Christ, and to the ends of his mediation. Surely the new creature cannot be so brutish, as not to mind the honour of that nature, to which it is so near allied, the glory of that God, unto whom it has the honour to bear a resemblance. A new creature has a mighty sprightliness, and a height of spirit in some measure, when any thing in his hands concerns God, more than when it concerns himself ; for his will being framed according to the will of God, is filled with an ambition for the promoting the excellency of his name.

4. The end of the new creation is to *advance* the soul. It can never be advanced by an end lower than

itself, or equal to itself. Any interest lower than God, would be a degrading of it, a disparagement to its state, and too sordid for the soul to drive at; for it is the excellency or sordidness of the end, which elevates or debases a man's spirits, and his action also: The one enlarges, the other shrivels up, the soul in its operation. All things below God, are unworthy of the boundless nature of the soul of man, much more unworthy of a soul rectified by a new creation. The soul is only perfected in a tendency to this end, and disgraced and lost in the impurity of lower aims. That grace that is most durable, and doth most ennoble the spirit of a man, has this property, that it *seeks not her own, nor vaunts itself*, 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5.

5. *It is impossible* the soul can have this new creation, without a change of end. It is not conceivable, how any thing can return to that which it does not eye as its end. The soul, as deriving its original from God, has an obligation in all its motions, to return to him, as its chief end. The new creature has an higher obligation by grace. Does that therefore deserve the name of the new creature, that is so far from answering a gracious tie, that it does not so much as answer a natural one? That is yet below the sphere of inanimate creatures, who all run back to their fountain, and one way or other, declare the glory of God. He is no new creature therefore, who is devotedly fawning upon himself, caressing himself; he is one that is yet bemired in his old nature, and has not yet partaken of the fruit of Christ's purchase, redeeming and renewing grace. Those that are under the efficacious influence of it, and are the temple of the Holy Spirit, do *glorify God in their body and spirit* too, inwardly as well as outwardly, *because they are God's*, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. The understanding and will are both elevated by grace. The more intelligent any creature is, the more noble is his end, or ought to be; and the more he does intend his end. The aim of a man is higher than that of a child; the aims

of men in this or that station, are still more noble than the ends of men in a lower rank. Since the new creation therefore, endues man with the most excellent nature he is capable of, it must fix a man upon the most excellent end, which is God and his glory; it were not else a new creature, or worthy of such a title.

6. This change of end only *fits* the soul for its proper service. From this end arises a quickness and an heartiness in every service. When God and his glory is not our end, our hearts flag, and we feel our spirits tired at our entrance into any service for him. When the apostle had made the glory of God his end, in testifying the gospel of the grace of God, then his *life* was not *counted dear* to him, that he *might finish his course with joy*, *Acts* 20. 24. Where this end sits uppermost in the heart, all allurements to the contrary, are mightily despised. What a scornful eye does the apostle cast upon all other things? And sets no higher a value upon them, than he would upon dross and dung, when they were not conducting to his main end, which was *the knowledge of Christ*, *Phil.* 3. 8, 10.

Well then; this is one of the most essential properties of the new creature, and that which is the clearest discovery of this state. A *new creature* is as earnest in secret, for the glory of God, and as industrious for God, as if the eyes of all the world were upon him; the bent of his heart always stands this way; *He glorifies God in his spirit, as well as body*, *1 Cor.* 6. 20. When men will be zealous in things that concern God, before men, and negligent in their spirits and inward part of the soul, then the glory of God was not their end, but themselves. For what is a man's end, sets an edge upon his spirit in private, as well as public. But a new creature is of another frame, when he finds that he hath missed of his full aim, and hath not had that single respect as he ought, he is unsatisfied and troubled, that God hath been no

more glorified by him. But he that is not renewed, is well pleased, if any concerns of self have been advanced, though God be not glorified ; and his soul is at rest in this act, as it hath lived to himself, and brought in something to increase the treasure of his self-ends.

3. As it is an inward change, in respect of principle and end ; so it is a change of *thoughts*. Being new, he is new in the choicest faculty. As when he was *after the flesh*, he *minde*d the things of the flesh ; so now being *after the spirit*, he *mind*s the things of the spirit, *Rom. 8. 5*. As a child hath not the thoughts of a man, so neither hath a natural man the thoughts of a new creature. A principle is placed in his understanding, which doth emit other beams different from that smoky light, which was in it before. Though a new creature cannot hinder the first motions ; yet he endeavours to suppress their proceeding any further, and excites others in his heart, to make head against them ; and would, as far as he could, hinder the rising of any wave, the least bubbling against right reason, and the interest of God. When David had an inclination in his heart to God's statutes, the immediate effect of it, is *to hate vain thoughts*. *I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes* : And it follows, *I hate vain thoughts*, *Psal. 119. 112, 113*. The vanity of his heart was a burden to him, and he loathed all the inward excrescences, any buds from that bitter stump he still bore within him.

A new creature is as careful against wickedness in the head or heart, as in the life. He would be purer in the sight of God, than in view of men : he knows none but God can see the workings of his heart, or the thoughts of his head ; yet he is as careful that they should not rise up, as that they should not break out. The soul is so changed, that it is no longer a stranger, and ill-willer to the motions of the Spirit ; it will welcome them upon their entrance, conduct them

into the innermost room, converse familiarly with them, and delight in their company; it invites their stay, pursues them when they seem to depart, holds them fast, and will not let them go, as the church does to Christ. He turns much in upon himself, sets his eye upon his own heart, keeps that with all diligence, to observe what issues of a spiritual life are there; as it is directed in *Prov. 4. 23, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* If he perceives any weeds to spring up there, or mushrooms, as they often will in a night, he cuts them up, and throws them out.

The understanding is more quick and sensible, to discern them in the first risings, to receive good ones, or check bad ones, than it was before: the new creature is sensible of any touch contrary to its interest. A corrupt mind draws to it the vilest things, and unproportionable to the true nature of the soul, as a corrupt stomach does unwholesome food; till by a new creation it be set higher, and by a sanctified reason becomes more choice about its objects; and then, like David, the heart is *filled as with marrow and fatness*, when he meditates on God in the night-watches, *Psal. 63. 5, 6.* The thoughts of God are an inward spring of pleasure to him, more than the thoughts of sin can be to a deformed and depraved soul.

4. Change of *comforts* follows upon this. Since there is a change of nature, there is a change of his complacency. The former nature is his trouble; therefore all his delights which arise from it, are its discontents and burden. Every nature hath a peculiar pleasure belonging to it: the nature of a dove will not acquiesce in that which pleases a swine; nor the new nature in that which pleased the old. The comforts of manhood are of another make than those of a child; and the comforts of a prince more elevated than those of a peasant, because he hath another spirit. That Spirit who is appointed to renew him, is appointed an officer to comfort him:

as therefore he gives him new principles, so he gives him new consolations. He is, as a comforter, to glorify Christ, to receive of his, and shew it unto the new creature. They are Christ's own words, *He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*, being described before under the title of a comforter, *John* 16. 14. He shall receive of mine, grace from me, suitable to the grace in me, wherewith to beautify; and comforts from me, suitable to those comforts in me, wherewith to refresh you.

As they are brought to live the life of God in holiness, so they are brought to live the life of God in joy and comfort. Righteousness, peace, joy, are the trinity which make up the kingdom of God in the heart; *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom.* 14. 17. As the grace of God is their life, so the joy of the Lord is their strength. Strangers to God intermeddle not with it, and have no share in it. There is a joy put into the heart, together with this new creature; *Thou hast put gladness into my heart, Psal.* 4. 7. A gladness not founded upon any worldly consideration, as the joy of men, not a joy of their own putting in; but the new creature's joy, is a joy of God's putting in: Other men's comforts are in the creature; the new creature's comforts in the Creator. Others cannot joy, if worldly things be removed because the foundation of their joy is without them: but these by the loss of worldly things, have their comforts rather increased than impaired, because the foundation of their joy is within them.

The comforts of a natural man are derived from *broken cisterns*. The comforts of a new creature are derived from the full *fountain of life*, which makes their very sufferings comfortable to them, *1 Pet.* 4. 13, 14. The prodigal by his change of mind, had a change of refreshment, robes for rags, and a fatted calf for husks. It is as much his comfort to loathe

himself, as derived from Adam, and to love the self implanted by God, as it was before the contrary. He can never look upon the new creature in him, but with delightful views; and a pleasure mingles itself with every cast of his eye upon it. For certainly from making God our end, and doing all things for his glory, flows the highest delight; since God is the only happiness of that soul that is in conjunction with him, as his main end, he must needs have a share in the happiness of God, as well as his nature. Felicity and consolation follow it, as the shadow does the body: and every act of the new creature towards God, is accompanied with comfort in the very acting.

6. As it is an inward change, so it is also an *outward* change. I call it outward, in regard of objects, in regard of operations; though it is principally inward, in regard of the prime seat of it; in regard of the form, which causes the outward. The power of seeing is in the soul, though the vision itself be in the eye. The change our Saviour made in those he cured, was in the organ, when he made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk, which did necessarily infer a change of objects, and a change of actions. So a man by this new creation, sees the things of God, hears the voice of God, walks in the ways of God. All outward changes argue not an inward; but an inward is always attended with an outward change; first in regard of *objects*. The world and sin was before the object of his inquiries and endeavours: now he seeks the face of God; *His soul follows hard after him*. The world and God are so contrary, that the love of the one is enmity to the other. From multitudes of objects which distracted him; he is come to unity, which quiets and settles him; *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple, Psal. 27. 4.* It

is no lower an object than this, that the soul is conversant about, about God himself, to embrace him; about what hath most of God in it, to value and cherish it; about the word of God, to direct him in his ways, and to do his work. The understanding is conversant about the things of God, in the apprehension of them; the will in the election, the affections in complacency in them.

Spiritual objects are set up by every faculty as the delightful things which it heartily embraceth. Before a man had no affection to God; you might as well have persuaded a swine to love the music of a lute, as a natural man supremely to love God: all his desires were set upon the dross of the world, the customs, course, corruptions, pleasures of the world; but a truly regenerate man can as little make the world his chief object of desire and affection, as a man used to choice viands, can feed upon chaff and husks. The intendment of the gospel is to set forth God in Christ, as an amiable object, as infinitely glorious. It declaims against the world, to draw men from the affectionate considerations of it. The renewed work then doth consist in fixing upon God in Christ, as the main object of desire and affection: when the heart therefore complies with the gospel, there must be a compliance with the chief subject of the gospel, and in such a manner as may answer the intendment of the gospel. While Paul was in his natural and pharisaical state, Christ and his truth was accounted as dung, trampled upon as dross, fit to be thrown out of the converse of mankind: but when his heart is changed, there is a change in the object of his valuation; Christ is then his treasure, his all; and other things but dross, in comparison of him, *Phil. 3. 8.*

An inward change is attended with an outward change in regard of operations. *Old things are passed away*, old actions as well as old affections. Operations are never constantly against nature; the heart and the actions do not always contradict one another.

According to the *abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks*, *Mat. 12. 24.* According to the spring of grace in the heart, will the hand of the life stand. It will vent itself more or less, according to the quantity of it. It is an inward baptism with fire, which will quickly break out, and show itself in the members; *By their fruits ye shall know them, Mat. 7. 20.* New apprehensions infer new operations. An alteration of judgment cannot be without an alteration of acting. As he hath *received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he walks in him, Col. 2. 6.* The very intendment of God in the new creation, was this, *Created to Christ in good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them, Eph. 2. 10.* If there be not then new works, there is no new creation; for the chief intention and aim of God cannot be frustrated. Christ formed in a man, is not a sleepy and inactive being; actions will scent of him. Fruits bear the nature of the root whence they spring, and upon which they flourish. A new root cannot bring forth old fruits; if the nature of a crab-tree be changed into that of a vine, it will bear no longer crabs, but grapes.

Where holiness is implanted in the nature, holiness will be imprinted in the life. A man that hath reason superior to sense, uses his sense rationally; a renewed man that hath grace superior to reason, useth his reason graciously. The operations were rational, when bare reason held the sceptre; but they are spiritual, when grace ascends the throne. For it cannot be, that that person who is acted by the Spirit, *lives in the Spirit, walks in the Spirit, Gal. 18. 25,* should do any thing without a spiritual tincture, in that wherein he is acted by it. For it is impossible, but every action must be dyed of the same colour with the principle whence it flows, and by which it is directed. Actions of sensitive nature, are by reason of grace, ordered by a new rule, directed to a new end. He eat and drank *to the flesh* before, now *to God*, *1 Cor. 10. 31.* He degraded his soul, to invent ways to pamper his

body. Now he puts his body in its due posture, to serve the soul, and both to exalt God.

Yea, his religious duties are changed, not as to the matter, but the manner. He knew them before, as he did Christ, after the flesh; he now knows them, and performs them after the Spirit. There is zeal instead of coldness, liveliness instead of deadness, brokenness instead of presumption, a spirit of liberty instead of the whip of conscience, confidence in God instead of confidence in duty, melting pleading of promises, instead of a pharasaical pleading of work; in a word, grace instead of nature, spirit instead of flesh. Paul, a pharasaical boaster, becomes a christian suppliant; *Behold, he prays*. This change is outward as well as inward; in a man of an exact morality, it is chiefly inward; he walks in his old outward ways with a new heart; in a loose man renewed, it is apparently outward; he hath left both his old ways and his old nature; but a man only outwardly reformed, without any inward change, walks in new ways with an old spirit. *He that lacks these things*, saith the apostle, after an enumeration of several graces, *hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*; for indeed he never was.

PART III.

THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.

Regeneration considered as a vital principle—As a habit—The motion of the new creature in the service of God—Its ready disposition—Activity of motion—Naturally active—Voluntarily active—Ferrently—Unboundedly—Powerfully—Easily, and pleasantly active—The activity of the regenerate soul permanent and orderly.

HAVING considered this new creation in the nature of a change,

II. Let us consider it in the nature of a *vital principle*. This new creation is a translation from death to life; *We know that we have passed from death to life, 1 John 3. 14.* And we have not a spiritual life, till we are in Christ; *He that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 John 5. 12.* When our Saviour called Lazarus out of the grave, he gave him a principle of life and motion; the same he doth, when he calls men from a spiritual death in sin; whatsoever we had from the *first Adam*, is mortal; whatsoever we have from the *second Adam*, is vital; the one communicates a spiritual life, as the other propagated a spiritual death. The new creature is a vital, powerful principle, naturally moving the soul to the service and obedience of God, and doth animate the faculties in their several motions,

as the soul doth quicken the members of the body. It is called the hidden man, the inward man, implying that it hath life and motion. As the life of the body is from the soul, as the effect from the cause; so the life of the soul is from grace. Christ is the meritorious cause of this life in his person; the efficient cause of it by his Spirit; but grace is the formal cause of this life, as God is the cause of our bodily life efficiently, and the soul the cause of it formally. It is not then a gilding, but a quickening; not a carving, but an enlivening.

Whatsoever proceeds from an external cause, is not life, or a living motion. A piece of wood may be carved in the shape of a man, but remains wood still, in such a form and figure. But a Christian hath a spiritual life breathed into him, as Adam had a natural. When Adam's body was formed of the earth, it was no more than earth, till a heavenly spark was breathed into him by God, to set him upon his feet, and enable that piece of earth to move. It is distinguished therefore from hypocrisy, which is but the shadow of christianity; this is a living principle; that a form, this a power; that a piece of art, this a nature. A picture may have the lineaments of a man, but not the life, understanding, and affections of a man.

3. Let us consider it as a *habit*, and then see what light the consideration of it, as a vital principle and a habit, give us into the nature of this new creation. By habit we must not understand, as we do in common speech, a clothing; as when we say, such a one was in such a habit; but by habit we mean an inward frame, enabling a man to act readily and easily; as when an artificer hath the habit of a trade. Since this new creation is not a destruction of the substance of the soul; but that there is the same physical being, and the same faculties in all men, and nothing is changed in its substance, as far as respects the nature of man: it is necessary, therefore, that this

new creation consist in gracious qualities and habits, which beautify and dispose the soul to act righteously and holily. Corruption of nature is the poison, the sickness, and deformity of our nature ; grace is the beauty, health, ornament of it, and that which gives it worth and value. When a debauched man is become virtuous, we say, he is another man, a new man, though he hath the same soul and body which he had before ; but he hath quitted those evil habits wherewith he was possessed. It is impossible to conceive a new creature without new habits ; nothing can be changed from a state of corruption to a state of purity, without them. The making darkness to become light, in the very nature of it, implies the introducing a new quality, *Ephes. 5. 8.* This is meant by the seed ; *His seed remains in him, 1 John 3. 9.* As seed makes the earth capable to bring forth good fruit, which had a nature before to bring forth, not corn, but weeds, till the grain was put into it ; and it is expressed by a *fountain of living water springing up into eternal life, John 4. 44**.

1. There is *such* a habit. †God provides as much for those that he loves, in order to a supernatural good, as for those creatures that he loves in order to a natural good : but God hath put into all creatures such forms and qualities, whereby they may be inclined of themselves to motions agreeable to their nature, in an easy and natural way. Much more does God infuse into those that he moves to the obtaining a supernatural good, some spiritual qualities, whereby they may be moved rationally, sweetly, and readily to attain that good : he puts into the soul a spirit of love, a spirit of grace, whereby as their understandings are possessed with a knowledge of the excellency of his ways, so their wills are so seasoned, by the power and sweetness of this habit, that they cannot, because they will not, act contrary thereunto. And this habit of

* τμηγῆ † Aquin. 2 æ. Q. 110. Art. 2.

grace, hath the same spiritual force in a gracious way, as those principles in other creatures in a natural way. As the habit of sin is called flesh, in regard of its nature, and death in regard of its consequent ; so the habit of grace is called the *new creature*, and *spirit*, in regard of its term and consequent life, *Gal. 5. 17.*

This habitual grace is the principle of all supernatural acts, as the soul concurs as an immanent principle to all works by this or that faculty. As Christ had a body prepared for him, to do the work of a Mediator ; so the soul hath a habit prepared for it, to do the work of a new creature. To this purpose there is a habit of truth or sincerity in the will, and a *hidden wisdom* in the understanding. As the corrupt nature is a habit of sin, so the new nature is a habit of grace ; God doth not only call us to believe, love, and obey, but brings in the grace of faith, and love, and obedience, bound up together, and plants it in the soil of the heart, to grow up there into eternal life ; he gives a willingness and readiness to believe, love, and obey.

2. This habit is *necessary*. The acts of a Christian are supernatural, which cannot be done without a supernatural principle ; we can no more do a gracious action without it, than the apostles could do the works of their office, unless endued with power from above, which our Saviour bids them *tarry at Jerusalem* for, *Luke 24. 49.* If there were not a gracious habit in the soul, no act could be gracious ; or supposing it could, it could not be natural, it would be only a force. New creation is not from the Spirit compelling, but inclining ; not like the throwing a stone contrary to its nature, but changing the nature, and planting other habits, whereby the actions become natural. As sin was habitual in a man by nature, so grace must be habitual in a new creature, otherwise a man is not brought into a contrary state, though the acts should be contrary, if there were not

a contrary habit ; for it is necessary the soul should be inclined in the same manner towards God, as before it was towards sin ; but the inclination to sin was habitual.

3. This habit is but *one*. For it is an entire rectitude in all the faculties, and an universal principle of working righteously. As the corrupt nature is called the *old Adam*, and a *body of death* ; the gracious nature is called the *new man* ; as a man is but one man, a body one body, though consisting of divers members, and several parts, all formed by one Spirit, and making up but one habit ; so that all sins are parts of that body of death ; so all graces are but strings of this one root : as from that primogenial light, kindled at the first creation by God, were framed the stars and lights of heaven, which have their several appearances and motions, and are distinct from one another, though all arising from the womb of that first light : so all particular graces, though they have their stated seasons of action, and are distinct in themselves ; yet all flow from, and are contained in this habit as in a root. They are as so many grapes growing upon one stalk, clusters proceeding from one root of the new nature. It is from the participation of the divine nature, that all those graces arise, the exercise of which the apostle exhorts them to, *2 Pet. 1. 4, &c.* And indeed it being a divine nature, must needs include all the perfections due to it : As the divine essence of God is one, yet contains all perfections eminently : and if there were a deficiency of any, it could not be the divine essence : so the grace infused into the heart, contains in it virtually all the perfections wherein it may agree with the nature of God's holiness, otherwise it were not a divine nature. If there were any defect in the nature of the habit, I say, in the nature of the habit. * And it cannot be otherwise : for though the Spirit may give one gift to one man, another gift to another ; yet when he would make a new creature, there must be a

* J. Goodwin.

nature or habit containing all graces. It could not else be a divine nature; for if the Spirit does purpose to make a new creature, he cannot but give all grace, which belongs to the essence and constitution of that new creature, otherwise he would either wilfully or weakly cross his own intention.

4. This habit receives *various* denominations; either, 1. from the *subject*. It is subjectively in the essence of the soul; but as it shows itself in the understanding, it is called the knowledge of God; as it is the will, it is a choice of God; as it is in the affections, it is a motion to God: as the body of death is in the understanding, ignorance; in the will, enmity; in the conscience, deadness; in the affections, disorder and frowardness. As diseases receive several names, as they are centred in several parts, yet are but the dyscrasy or distemper of the humours.

The new habit of grace in the soul receives various denominations from the *object*. As it closes with Christ dying, it is faith; as it rejoiceth in Christ living, it is love; as it lies at the feet of Christ, it is humility; as it observes the will of Christ, it is obedience; as it submits to Christ afflicting, it is patience; as it regards Christ offended, it is grief; yet all arising from one habit, and animated by faith; so that it is the love of faith, the joy of faith, the humility of faith, the patience of faith: they all spring from one habit, seated in one soul, conversant about one object, God in Christ; such a unity there is in all these diversifications. As the *holy oil* wherewith the vessels of the tabernacle were anointed, was but one ointment, though composed of many ingredients; as all perfections of creatures are eminently in one God; all the evil dispositions of the creatures seminally in man by nature; so all the beauties of grace are eminently included in this habit.

Hence we may take a prospect of the nature of the new creature. It being thus a vital principle and a habit, therefore the motion to God and for God, must be,

1. Ready, in respect of disposition. He stands ready and disposed to every good work, upon God's call. As the habit of sin disposes the soul to every evil work, so the habit of grace prepares it for every good work, and makes it meet for its Master's use ; *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for his master's use, and prepared unto every good work, 2 Tim.*

2. 21. It is just as it was with Isaiah, at the first sight of the vision he complains, *Woe is me ! I am a man of unclean lips*, chap. 6. 5, taken up with self-reflection ; no offers to act for God : but when a live coal was taken from the altar, and laid upon his mouth, there is a ready answer to God's question ; *Whom shall I send ? Here am I, send me*, ver. 7, 8. No demurs ; it was a live coal from the altar had quickened him into a new frame for God. David does not say, he had performed the statutes of God, but he had *inclined his heart* to perform them.

That I may not grate upon any troubled spirit ; consider, that this readiness is seminally in *every* renewed person, yet it does not always actually appear. As the old nature contains in it seminally all sins, yet every man is more prone to one than another, according to education, temper of body, or a set of temptations ; so the heart of a renewed man has an habitual disposition to the exercise of all grace, because it hath the seeds of all graces in it ; yet it does not act all alike, for want of vigorous occasions. As the attributes of God, though in the highest perfection, yet in their exercise in the world, sometimes one appears more triumphant than another, sometimes more of patience, sometimes mercy, sometimes justice, sometimes wisdom, one is more eminently apparent than another : so the divine nature hath seminally in this habit all grace, and an agreeableness to every duty enjoined ; a principle to send forth the fruits of all, when an object is offered, and the grace excited by

the Spirit of God ; yet sometimes one is more visible than another, according to the call it hath to stand forth and shew itself.

This habitual disposition may be, when there is not a present actual fitness for some service of a higher strain, by reason of some particular commission of sin, which hath sullied the soul. As a vessel of honour in respect of its formation, may be fit for use ; but in respect of some foulness contracted, may not be immediately fit for some noble service, till a new scouring hath passed upon it. A grown christian, who has his senses exercised in the ways of God, does not always actually exercise this habit ; yet he is ready upon the least motion actually to do it : as a new creature having a change of end, habitually minds the glory of God, yet he does not in every action actually think of it, or will it as his end : but he is ready to bring this habitual aim into exercise upon the least motion, and reaches out his arm to embrace and stand right to that point. David had an habitual repentance in him, while he lay asleep in his sin ; and by virtue of this habit, he does without any resistance comply with the first touch God gave him by Nathan. His repentance flowed, and never ceased, till it had done its perfect work. It was a sign of a heart of flesh ; a heart of stone could not have been so flexible. Job was eminent for patience ; but being a new creature, he had a disposition to all the rest, and had acted them with as high a strain, had he had the same occasions.

Again, this readiness to every service does not actually appear in persons newly regenerate. I think the lowest degree of this habit in one newly regenerate, is a purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord. *When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, Acts 11. 23.* Certainly when there is such a fixed and constant purpose, it is a token of the grace of God : yet to this purpose

there may not always be connexed an actual readiness to every service : for at the first beginning of the new creature there is a strong resistance ; it is in a strange soil ; the armies of hell are in array against it ; it is like a Daniel in a lion's den, or a Lot in Sodom, only God restrains the force of these enemies. As it is in a child derived from Adam, there is a principle in the natural corruption to exert all kind of wickedness ; yet it doth not presently rise to the utmost of its force, till ripened by time and other intervening causes : so though the new creature hath in it a readiness virtually to the most raised action, to be as believing and laborious as Paul, as zealous as Elijah, as patient as Job, yet it mounts not presently to this state ; a time must be allowed for growth.

There is an infancy in grace, as well as in manhood. And as a child, though his soul be of the same nature with that of a man, yet he cannot exercise those acts of understanding and reason, because of the predominancy of sense, and the indisposition of the organs : so neither can a young christian : he may have a disposition equal to the best christians, but not an equal strength ; the reluctancy of the corrupt habits is more vigorous, not being much mortified ; he wants also that additional strength gained by exercise. There may be a greater resistance to one grace more than to another, from the strength of some corruption particularly opposite to that grace ; yet *to will is present with him*, though he *cannot perform that which is good*, Rom. 7. 18. The posture of the soul to God was as natural to him, as the posture of the heart was before to sin. As a young boy first come to school, may have as strong a purpose to get learning, as a man that hath taken all his degrees in the university.

The first graces which appear in a renewed soul, are repentance and faith ; because regeneration being a rooting up from the old stock, and setting up a new, as it relates to the old stock, it necessarily produces repentance upon the sight of his misery, and for being

upon the old stock so long. And faith, as a necessary grace for closing with the Redeemer upon a sight of him, and for ingrafting him upon a new stock. And then love, admiration, and thankfulness walk the stage, from a reflection upon the greatness of the misery escaped, and the great deliverance attained. Sprouts from a root grow up, some faster, some slower; yet all arising from the same root. So some graces appear at the very first setting this habit in the soul, other graces lie hid till new occasions draw them out. This disposition, inclination, will, readiness, purpose, is the first language of a habit.

2. A second thing wherein you have a prospect of the new creature is this; as it is ready in respect of disposition, so it is in *activity of motion*. Since it is a life infused by infinite activity; since it is a habit bearing the impression of God, and maintained by a union with him, it is impossible it can be sleepy and dull in a constant way. All life hath motion proper to the principle of it. Rational life is attended with rational actions: sensitive life, with acts proper to sense. It is as impossible then that a spiritual life should be without acts consonant to it, as that the sun should appear in the firmament without darting forth its beams. All life is accompanied with natural heat, which is the band of it, whereby the body is enabled to a vigorous motion. The new creature is not a marble statue, or a transparent piece of chrystal, which hath purity, but not life. It is a living spirit, and therefore active; a pure spirit, and therefore purely active, according to the degree of it. It is the same habit in part renewed, which Adam had by creation, which was not a sluggish and unwieldy principle; it must therefore have an activity, it could not else be a proper principle to contest with the contrary principle, which is active like the sea, casting out mire and dirt. Since the old Adam conveyed such a vigorous principle of corruption, the new Adam is not wanting to endue the principle of his conveyance with a suit-

able activity. *Grace abounds* in its vigour, as well as *sin hath abounded* in its kind, *Rom. 5. 20.* Upon Christ's call, Matthew left his receipt of custom; the other apostles their nets; motion presently follows an enlivening call of God. It is first a habit, then an act; first a spirit of grace and supplication, then a *looking upon him whom they have pierced*, by an act of their understanding, and a *mourning* by an act of the will, *Zech. 12. 10, 11.* First a *sanctification of the Spirit*, then a *belief of the truth* to the obtaining of glory, *2 Thes. 2. 13.* When any thing ceaseth to act, there is either an oppression, or a death of nature.

1. This principle of the new creature is *naturally* active. All vital motions are natural; sometimes in men there are natural actions without any actual exercise of reason; as when the spirits flow out to any part for the defence of it upon the motion of any passion, as blood starts to the face upon shame, &c. which all the reason of a man cannot hinder. It is as natural to this new habit to produce new actions, as for any thing to engender according to its own likeness and species; as for a living tree to spring out in leaves and fruits. A renewed man, whose seed is within himself, brings forth fruit after its kind, as well as the herbs and the trees, *Gen. 1. 12.* All living creatures move agreeably to their natures, with a spontaneity and freedom of nature. The bramble does not more naturally bring forth thorns, than a habit of sin does steam out sinful actions; nor a fountain more freely bubble up its water, than a habit of grace springs up in holy actions. For shall the workmanship of God be more unapt to the proper end of it, than the workmanship of the devil, since good works are the end of God's new creating us, that we should walk in them? Walking is a natural motion; *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, Eph. 2. 10.* A well-dressed vine does not more naturally bring forth grapes, than a soul rooted in

Christ does the fruits of the Spirit; neither does the sun more naturally enlighten the world with its beams, than the new creature shoots forth its desires and affections to God; for it is impossible but this habit should tend to him, since it is planted by him.

The new creature's services are his meat and drink, not his work; it is as natural to him to do it, as for a creature to desire and take its proper food; you need not hire a child to suck, by the promises of fine things, it will naturally, without imitation, take the breast. The new creature having a righteous and just nature, cannot but do righteous things; nothing can act against its nature, while nature is orderly, and not disturbed by some disease or frenzy. As God, whose image a regenerate man bears, cannot but do good, because his nature is goodness; *How can you that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* Rom. 6. 2. He can no more naturally do it, than a dead man can walk. Not but that there are some mistakes sometimes, which proceed not from nature, but from some obstructing humour. Nature does not err in its right course, unless hindered by some adversary: the errors renewed men are subject to, proceed not from the regenerate principle in them, but from that remainder of corruption, which by degrees is weakened by the other, and at last wholly put off.

2. It is *voluntarily* active. There is a kind of natural necessity of motion, from life and habit, yet also a voluntary choice; it is a power which constrains and inclines the will. The apostle tells us, there was a necessity laid upon him to preach the gospel, yet it was not a compulsion, but a voluntary act, after his will was changed. The new creature is not constrained from without, but flows freely, is not forced; the chief work is upon the will; the proper effect of any work upon the will, is voluntariness; the Spirit works to make it willing, its motion then is not by compulsion: there is a sweet necessity of the new nature,

and a gracious choice of will, which meet together and embrace each other; a natural, not a coactive necessity. How freely does the soul, winged with grace, move to and for God, as a bird in the air; with what a free and ready spirit doth the new creature go to prayer, reading, and hearing? How freely does it breathe in the air of heaven? Not spurred by outward interest, or dragged by the threatenings of the law, nor chid to it by the clamours of conscience; but gently moved to it, and upheld in it, by a soft, and dove-like, and free spirit, *Psa.* 51. 12. How great is the difference between the flowing of a fountain, and the dropping of a sponge? One is free, the other squeezed. Between a statue drawn upon wheels, and a living motion? One moves, the other is moved.

Our Saviour by *washing us from our sins in his own blood, hath made us kings and priests unto God, Rev.* 1. 6. First, kings, putting into the new creature a royal and magnanimous frame, as he did into Saul, when he advanced him to the kingdom: and then priests, to offer sacrifices to God with this royal and generous spirit: so that it is as troublesome to a soul, having this royal spirit, to omit things proper to this frame, as it is for a legalist to do them. Therefore where there are frequent omissions of duty, or a constant dulness in it, it shows the want of this kingly frame, and consequently that we are not washed from our sins in the blood of Christ. There is both such a nature, and such a choice, that, as the apostle saith, *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, 2 Cor.* 13. 8. So the new creature cannot but do the things which are holy, just, and good, so far as he is regenerate, were there no rule without to guide him, because he hath a habit of holiness with him, a will set to the right point. His former state made him have an aversion from holy services; this makes all spiritual duties connatural to him: so that it is as irksome for him to live without God in the world, as

before it was to live with him : he can as soon strip himself of his own soul, as act from a renewed principle, contrary to God and righteousness.

3. It is *fervently* active. The nobler the being of any thing is, the greater degree of activity it is attended with ; the more spiritual the quality, the more vigorous the effect. Both the spirituality of the principle, excellency of the object, and affection to the end, conspire together to increase this activity. The principle is spiritually vital ; the operation therefore is vigorous : the object is God as amiable ; the warmer therefore the zeal : the acts are, loving God, trusting in God, depending on God, promoting his kingdom in the heart, acts delightful in themselves, delightful in their issue, the motion in them more quick : the end is the glory of God, the happiness of the creature ; the higher the end, the more elevated the soul. There is an innate principle in every thing to preserve its happiness, it is as natural as life itself. Inanimate creatures are endued with this nature : the flame aspires to heaven, and waves on this and that side greedily, to catch what may supply a fuel ; much more will other creatures act vehemently for that which preserves their beings ; the toad to its plantain, the swallow to its celendine, the babe to the breast, and the christian to the word.

There is in the new creature an *impetus* and force, settled in the soul to do good. It is a baptism of fire following that with water. The Spirit is first as water, washing us from our filth ; then as fire, quickening us with grace. *I baptize you with water, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire, Matt. 3. 11.* In this respect it is likened to creatures of the greatest activity ; fire, wind, a spring of living water ; what more active, in the rank of corporeal beings, than fire and wind, either above or in the bowels of the earth ? Witness the many stately buildings speedily consumed by the one, or overthrown by the other. The new principle in the creature fills every

part, dissolves the hard heart, and makes it moveable in the ways of God with a glowing heat. But above this, there is a higher denomination, the new creature is called Spirit. *That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, John 3. 6*; that is, a spiritual creature. The activity of a spirit inconceivably surmounts that of a body; what vast strides can a spirit take in a moment, from heaven to earth? The habit of sin, in respect of its vehemency to evil, is called a spirit: *a spirit of whoredom*; as well as the habit of grace, in respect of its vehemency to good, *a spirit of love, 2 Tim. 1. 7.*

How active is the new creature in its motion to God? It can fly in a thought from earth to heaven, enter the bosom of God, clasp about him, hold him fast, even till Almightyness bids him let him alone. Where there are rivers of living waters in the soul, they will flow; where there is a divine habit, the soul will have a *paroxysm* of divine heat for the glory of God, *Acts 17. 16.* Paul's spirit was stirred in him upon the sight of the Athenians' idolatry. If created to good works, then not to a dull and sluggish motion in them; this was not the intendment of the Creator, and therefore not the disposition of the creature.

4. It is *unboundedly* active. This new creature's desires are as large as his nature, he cannot be bound up in the narrow and contracted motions of his former disposition. The natural activity of the soul overflows, like a swelled river, all natural bounds, since it is possessed by a spiritual habit. A man without a habit in an art, does but bungle at his work, is quickly tired, desponds of attaining what he would; but he that hath a habit, suppose of mathematical knowledge, finds one proposition following upon another, one deduction rising up from another, that he hath a largeness, he knows not where to end: so the new creature finds one affection coming after another, many times in transports and out-goings to God, which know no limits. It is unboundedly active in *affections* to God. The new creature would be as

unlimited in its affections to God, as God is in his affection to him. It will not fix lower than the object it hath pitched upon in heaven; all its operations tend thither; nothing below can give them a cessation, though they may suffer an interruption; it flies up, and is pulled back; it mounts again and again, follows hard on after the Lord. His affections are larger than his ability. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee, Psal. 73. 25.*

He seems to scorn every thing else in comparison of God, though it were an angel. Like a man that makes haste to some mark, turns the impediments on this side and that side: the new creature puts by the temptations of the flesh and the world, to make its way into the bosom of God, the centre of its rest, and the boundless limit of its soul. The sun, so many thousand miles distant from us, sends its rays as far as the lowest valley of the earth; and the new creature, the dartings of his soul to the highest heavens. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, 2 Cor. 3. 16, 17;* the veil is taken away, it *beholds as in a glass, the glory of the Lord;* like an eagle, mounts up as near as it can to the sun, looks upon it till its eyes be dazzled with its brightness: he is never tired with the views of him; his desires for him are never bounded but by him; one breathing after another, that he may fill God, as it were, with his affections, as he is filled by him with his Spirit. In his obedience too, he would have his heart enlarged, that he may run, not creep, in the ways of God's commandments; it is his grief that he cannot keep pace with God's commandments: it is his joy that God flies upon the wings of the wind to him; and his sorrow that he cannot fly upon the wings of the wind to God; he groans under his dulness; and his pleasure consists much in a liberty in God's service.

The principle of the new creature is active in *disaffection to sin.* He hates that body of death which

hinders the accomplishment of the desires of his soul ; and regards it at no other rate, than his fetter, disease, and torture. He is discomposed when he meets with any check in his religious course ; it is a violence to his new nature, and he cannot bear it without regret. His anger and impatience rises with as much force against any obstacle to a free converse with God, as it did before against any impediment in the way of his lust. Nature is restless till it hath got the conquest of the disease and corrupt humours of the body. Neither can a new creature be at quiet, till all that is against the interest of the new nature, is purged out ; and to that purpose he daily knocks at heaven's gates for new strength and recruits of power against sin in the spiritual conflict. It is a trouble to him, that he has not as full a sense of his own corruptions as he would, and therefore he goes frequently to God, to beg new discoveries of sin, that he may fetch his enemy out of his holds, and beat it to death : for by this habit the understanding is more quick in discerning the first rising of any sinful motion, and sensible of the least touch contrary to the new interest of it.

5. The new nature is *powerfully* active. There is not only an unbounded affection, but there is a power inherent in this habit to enable the soul to act ; all habits add strength to the faculty. It is therefore called *might in the inner man*, *Eph. 3. 16*, and *a spirit of power*, *2 Tim. 1. 7*. It is put as a stock into the heart, to maintain the acts of holiness ; as there is a stock of sap in the root to produce branches and fruit : a power of acting is always united with a form, and rooted in it. In regard the new nature is implanted by a higher cause than any moral habits, even by the Spirit of God, it must be able to do more than any moral nature can ; and being more excellent than moral nature, must produce more excellent operations, 'otherwise it were not of a more excellent kind, if it had not a more excellent power :

Jesus Christ was appointed to be a quickening Spirit, to convey a powerful life, to enable us to live to God. *The kingdom of God in the heart*, as well as that in the world, *is not in word, but in power*, 2 Cor. 4. 20. Move steel as often as you will, you can never make it of itself move towards the north; but by the impression made on it by the loadstone, there is a power derived to turn, and stand that way of its own accord. By nature we *are without strength*, because without life, Eph. 2. 1. But in the renewing there is strength conveyed together with life; an ability to walk in God's statutes, conveyed with the new heart: out of weakness the soul is made strong; and the grace within, in concurrence with the supplies of the Spirit, is sufficient for it. It is not only an outward strength, as is from a staff in a sick man's hand; but an inward might. But besides this inherent strength, there is an adherent ability; for Christ, who is his *life*, Col. 3. 4, is also his *strength*. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. 4. 13. So that whatsoever active power is wanting in itself, can be supplied by the head. And therefore the new creature has a kind of almighty power of activity, by the communication of another, which is called a *greatness of power*, and a mighty power which works towards them, or, *εις ημᾶς*, *in them that believe*, Eph. 1. 19. This power resides in the heart, and this adherent power is ready for it; but neither of them is always perceptible, but upon some emergency; as a sound man hath a greater power to act than he puts forth upon all occasions.

6. It is *easily* active. Since that motion to God, and for God, is connatural and voluntary, and a power and ability also in the new creature, it must follow, that the motion is very easy. Habits are to strengthen the faculty, and facilitate the acting of it. Bubbling is no pain to a fountain: rivers of water flow from their sources easily, because naturally. The motion of this habit is as easy as the motion of the

lungs, or the pulse of the artery; though constant, yet not troublesome or painful in itself; but by reason of some imparted humour settled in them. This stock of grace is called the unction. *But you have an unction from the Holy One, 1 John 2. 20*; the inward oiling the soul; as oil communicates agility to the body. This unction some understand of habitual grace, conveyed from the Holy One by the Spirit. As this unction upon our Saviour, was the cause of his activity for God in doing good. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, Acts 10. 38*; so it being the same in the new creature, will have the like effect upon him. Supernatural motions are as easy, by the strength of a supernatural habit, as natural motions are by the strength of natural habits. A bird with as much ease flies upward, as a beast walks upon the ground; and the seed does with as much ease spring up, and put its ear out of the ground, as a bitter root does its unwholesome fruits and flowers. So when the soul is filled with this new habit, the walks in the ways of God are as easy by virtue of it, as a course of sin and folly was before. The *yoke* of itself is easy, *Mat. 11. 30*, and the motion under a light yoke cannot be grievous: the very yoke is not a shackle and burden, but a privilege. There is indeed some reluctance sometimes, which arises not from the will, as renewed, but from some evil habits resident in the soul, not yet fully conquered by renewing grace. You know how the apostle Paul doth distinguish between the posture of his will, and the interruptions by that sin which dwelt in him, *Rom. 18. 19, 20*.

7. It is *pleasantly* active. *Ἡδὸ μὲν τὸ κατα φῶς σιν*, saith the philosopher. As all actions which flow from life, are pleasant; so those which flow from a divine life in the soul. It is a joy to a just man to *do judgment*, *Prov. 21. 15*. That is, the entire inclination of the soul stands right to such actions: and as much a joy to him to do judgment, when enabled thereunto by a

gracious habit, as it is to a sinful man under the bonds of iniquity, to commit it. His soul leaps as much at an opportunity of pleasing God, as before, at the proposal of a sinful object. Never did the sun naturally rejoice so much *like a strong man to run its race* in the heavens, as the new man doth spiritually rejoice to run his race to heaven. It is a mighty pleasure to have our spiritual enemies under our feet, to be estranged from them: it is the purest delight to comply with God, and be embosomed in him. He is swallowed up in these choicer pleasures, as a man that has had his full draughts of learning, is in his studies, whence his diseases cannot draw him, though in his childish time, he counted them his task and burden.*

The delights of an heart seasoned with habitual grace, are more ravishing than all the pleasures of sense, because they arise from an habit planted in the soul by that spirit, which is a spirit of joy as well as of grace: the fatness of God's house, the sacrifices presented by him, are his delight: and he drinks of a river of pleasure in his very acts of worship; *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. In keeping thy commandments there is great reward, Psal. 36. 8.* He finds much sweetness in the very acts of worship. Ah! how can the motions of the habits of sin, under the quarrels of conscience, yield as much delight, as the habits of grace under the breathings of the Spirit? The very marks of Christ in his body, are his delight and triumph: he takes pleasure in distresses for Christ's sake; saith the apostle, *I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. 12. 10.* The motions of his soul to Christ are his life and joy. He chides his soul, that her flights to Christ are not as strong as

* Jacks. vol. 3. chap. 27. p. 474, &c.

Christ's flights to him. He would have a delight in doing the will of God's precept, as Christ had in doing the will of the mediatory command. He rejoices in his breathings after God, though he wants him, and is glad his soul can have any flights towards him, though he cannot find him.

The tabernacles of God are amiable, when his *heart and his flesh cries out for the living God ; How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord ? my soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord, Psal. 84. 1, 2.* And when by reason of some distemper, he cannot move so readily, some disease fetters him, some corruption hath cast a clog upon him ; yet he delights in the thoughts of what he had : as a man in the former converses with his friend, though now at a distance ; and cheers up his soul with the thoughts that he will again return ; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ! hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, Psal. 42. 5, 11.* He grieves because he at present cannot do what he would ; and hopes for another frame, and rejoices in the faith, that he shall repossess it : *He will turn again, &c. Micah 7. 19.* A natural man without a habit of grace, may move in some ways outwardly good, but with some reluctance, and without any pleasure in the goodness of the thing enjoined, or the goodness of that God who enjoins it. He may have a sudden inclination to do a good action, but he is not pleased with that inclination itself.

Ahab's humiliation was good in itself, no doubt but Ahab was pleased with it, but not as it was humiliation, or had a likeness to a gracious action, or a tendency to the pleasing God ; but as it was a means of removing the judgment threatened ; so that his pleasure was only in the issue of it : but a gracious soul is pleased with the habit itself ; for he considers it as the perfection of his nature, regards it as an ancient inmate, though separated from his nature by Adam's degeneracy ; as friends long absent, rejoice

in one another. When this rectitude is in part restored, and understood to be of kin to it by creation, but lost and now returned, there must needs be an high complacency in the soul, and a joyful compli-
ance with it. And the stronger and more vigorous this inward rectitude is in habit, the more pleasure a man hath in the exercise of it. As God, who is infinitely righteous in all his ways and in all his works, has an infinite pleasure in the exercise of this righteousness, and an infinite loathing of what is contrary to it, because it is his infinite nature; so the stronger the habit in a man, the more contentment there is in the exercise of it, because his nature is more elevated. And what is natural, is delightful; and the more natural the more delightful. Mercy is natural to God, therefore he delights in it; and because infinitely natural, therefore he infinitely delights in it.

Well then: since all the motions of nature are pleasant, the new nature is not inferior in the pleasure of acting, to any other nature whatsoever. It being the perfectest nature, must beget the most delightful operations. What a pleasure is it to draw near to God, to melt before him, to pour out a prayer to him, and dissolve itself into love and affection in any address to him!

8. It is a *permanent* activity. There is a spring of perpetual motion.* The fountain does constantly bubble. The sun constantly moves, because naturally. Whatsoever is natural, is constant in its posture: fire perpetually burns, and water perpetually cools. What is the essential property of a thing, does *competere semper*: a man is always rational, and ready to act reason: If there be any indisposition, it is not in the soul, but in the organ, or ill habit of the body, which obstructs the motions of the soul, and is an unfit instrument for it to act by. This habit is

* The Philosopher saith of an habit *εκ ευκινητον εκ ευμετ άβολον*, Aristot. Categ. cap. 5.

not a passion, but a principle ; not a motion, but a spring of uniform motion ; it is wrought in the nature, and like the heart, is continually beating. The principle is permanent ; it is an abiding anointing : it is settled by God, given to us in Christ, supported and assured by the earnest of the Spirit in the heart, where this habit is seated. All is expressed, *Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also* (that is, beside this) *sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,* 1 Cor. 1. 21, 22.

It is a life and habit more fixed than that in Adam : his life depended upon the rectitude of his soul ; but this depends principally upon the power of the Spirit, and the everlasting life of Christ. It is a water which quenches all thirst, and never leaves springing, till it mount up to eternal life, *John 4. 14.* It is perpetually active and springing, till it be swallowed up in glory, as rivers in the sea. Others may move by some wires, and have some strains of a natural religion by some sudden impulses, which touch the strings and faculties of the soul ; but the wires break, the touch ceases, and the motion with it ; it hath no living spring. Nay, sometimes those motions in natural men under the gospel, may be more quick, and warm, and violent for a time, than the natural motion of this habit ; as the motion of a stone out of a sling, is quicker than that of life, but faints by degrees, because it is from a force impressed, not implanted and inherent in the nature. They are just like water heated by the fire, which has a fit of warmth, and may heat other things ; but though you should heat it a thousand times, the quality not being natural, will vanish, and the water return to its former coldness.

But the new heart being in the new creature causes him to walk in the statutes of God, not by fits and starts, but with an uniform and harmonious motion ; *Ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,* Ezek. 36.

27. You shall treasure them in your minds, and act them in your lives. Not but that there are in the new creature some faintings: it is sometimes more vigorous, sometimes more weak in its motion: it hath its sicknesses; it meets with wounds, but none of them to death. Every one that is *born of the Spirit, is like the wind, John 3. 8*; it moves and blusters, and when you think it is passed away, it returns, resumes its force, and you feel as stiff a motion as you did before. A man is never weary of that which is habitual to him. There may be a weariness *in* duty and service, but not a weariness *of* it, so as to throw it off: but after he hath refreshed and recruited himself, his habit will put him upon a delightful return to it. Where the ways of God are in the heart habitually, such shall go from strength to strength, till they appear in Sion, though there may be some rests and intermissions by the way; *In whose heart are the ways of them: some read, the high ways of God in their hearts, Psal. 84. 5, 6*, more consonant to the Hebrew.

9. It is an *orderly* motion and activity. Natural motions are orderly. As affirmative precepts bind *semper*, but not *ad semper*; so this habit enables the soul *semper*, but not *ad semper*: I mean, not to this or that service at all times. Natural things have their stated times, places, and measures: as *trees bring forth fruit in their season*, so doth the new creature bring forth fruit *in his season*; in a season proper for that fruit, *Psal. 1. 3*. It is always producing some fruit or other, according to the particular seasons, sometimes love, sometimes humility, sometimes patience. This habit is ready at hand, whence he draws out fruits new and old. *As God does all things in weight, and number, and measure; so does this habit of his own implanting. As God gives every creature

* Dr. Goodwin, *Vanity of Thoughts*, p. 14.

meat in due season, so the new creature renders God his fruit in due season. As a wicked man is always acting sin, sometimes one, sometimes another, according to the seasons of them ; so does this habit in the new creature, act grace, sometimes one grace, and sometimes another.

PART IV.

THE POWER OF GRACE IN THE REGENERATE.

*Reasons why regenerate men cannot sin as others do—
The law put into their hearts—Written in the heart
wholly—The law a rule of life—Inward knowledge
of the law—Inward conformity to it—Ready obe-
dience to it—Strong affection for it—Actual ability
to obey—The new creature like God—Not in his
essence—The whole image of God drawn in the new
creature—His peculiar likeness to Christ—Likeness
to the Spirit—Wherein likeness to God chiefly con-
sists.*

FROM what has before been advanced upon the doctrine of regeneration, there follows,

A predominancy of grace in the new creature. As a state of nature consists in the prevalency of the corrupt habit, which leavens the whole man; so the predominancy of the gracious habit, which spreads itself over the whole soul, striving with the powerful opposite, which in part resides there still; it is a habit put in to mate and destroy that habit of sin which was there before; the soul by it is made alive from the dead, *Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. 6. 13.* Life triumphs over death; grace over nature; whereby the members become instruments of righteousness unto God, instead of being instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. It is put in to guide reason and will, and therefore is invested with the sovereign power. As sense was first in man, but that veiled when reason stepped into the throne, as being a more excellent principle than sense; so must reason descend and give place to grace when that

comes in, as being a more excellent principle than reason ; it is reason it should have the sovereignty, for it does but regain its own right, and take possession, which by the law of creation it ought to have kept till violently ejected by man. He that hath this habit, hath a spirit of might, as well as of the fear of the Lord, the same Spirit which was in Christ, which is a *Spirit of might*. *They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, have, not shall; Isa. 11. 2* ; as soon as ever they are Christ's, which they are by this principle, a deadly wound is given to sin ; such a one scorns to have any thing more to do with idols ; he *overcomes the world*, 1 *John* 5. 4. He can do all things, enter the lists with the strongest Goliath ; repel the sharpest temptations, through Christ which *strengthens him*, *Phil.* 4. 13 ; so that grace is predominant.

There follows also from hence a *difficulty to sin*. No creature can easily act against a rooted habit ; how hard is it to make a beast do that which is different from, and contrary to, his nature ? To act contrary to nature is burdensome and intolerable. What creature would willingly change its element ? Will a bird sink of its own accord into the water, or a fish delight to leap upon the land, whose only element is the water ? What creature would court the destruction of its life ? What man would willingly deform and gash his own body ? Men never do so by nature, but when phrenzy hath dispossessed them of their reason. Sin must dispossess a christian of his grace, before it can be easy for him to run into ways destructive to his nature and blessedness. That principle which is in all natures, must be more eminently in the highest nature, and proportionably in every nature that is of nearest approach to it. Righteousness and holiness is the very constitution of the new creature ; *That new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4. 24.*

It is as impossible for the new creature to sin by the

influence of habit, as for fire to moisten by the quality of heat, or water to burn by the quality of cold. It is as impossible for that habit to bring forth the fruits of sin, as for the sun to be the cause of darkness ; or a sweet fig-tree to bring forth sour fruit. Yet as there is darkness in the air, though the sun be up, by the interposition of thick clouds, so is there darkness in the new creature from the habit of sin in the soul, which is not only a lodger, but an unwelcome inhabitant ; *Sin that dwells in me, Rom. 7. 20* ; and acts according to its nature, though much overpowered and weakened by degrees by the habit of grace. Therefore it is a hard thing for him to sin ; *He cannot sin, 1 John 7. 9*. It is as hard for him to contradict the new nature, as before to cross the old. *I cannot do this wickedness*, saith Joseph, it is against the frame and disposition of my soul.

It must be difficult to sin against *purpose* of heart, which is the lowest step of the new nature, *Acts 11. 23*, though it be not hard to sin against a flashy resolve. It is hard for a man to sin, who hath *cordially chosen* God for his portion, which every new nature doth, with a fixed resolution to keep his word ; *Thou art my portion, O Lord ; I have said, that I would keep thy word, Psal. 119. 57*. When it is carried out with a free motion to God, it cannot easily be diverted from that charming object ; he cannot but value any diversion at no better a rate than that of punishment. It is difficult for him to contradict the new habit, wherewith he is so *highly pleased*, and which he is assured hath nothing but happiness in the womb of it. It must be difficult for him to act that, which by virtue of this habit, he is daily in the *mortification* of. It is difficult for the habit of sin in him, to do *the same acts*, after it hath received a *deadly wound*, as for a wounded man to do that which he could when he was sound.

This nature cannot be in a man without an *universal* enmity to sin, though it may without an universal victory ; this belongs to the perfection of it ; but en-

mity to the very constitution of it; *I will put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. 3. 15.* He can at the best but half sin, and scarce that; he could not commit sin very freely before, because of the reluctancy of natural conscience; he can less freely do it now, since there is a habit of grace in him, which does more powerfully fly in the face of sin when it appears; therefore there can be but a partial will to it, or delight in it. The new man in the heart can never do it; the old man remaining cannot fully do it, because of the contradiction it receives from the new habit. If he does at any time sin, this new nature can be no more pleased with it, than the nature of a man is with the poison which he has wilfully taken, which will contest with it, and endeavour to expel it, whether a man will or no; so that if a new creature be taken at a disadvantage, and be defiled by the remaining habit of sin in the heart, his spirit is wounded, his soul bleeds, his conscience upbraids him, he is displeased with himself and with his sin, runs to God, searcheth into himself, calls heaven and earth to his assistance, sharpens his spiritual weapons, and by virtue of this habit in him is dissatisfied, and in little ease, till he hath overcome this rebellion of lust, dispossessed it, removed the guilt, and cast out the filth.

IV. As we have considered this work as a change, a vital principle, a habit, so we will consider it *as a law put into the heart.* Every creature has a law belonging to its nature, so hath the new creature. Man hath a law of reason; beasts a law of sense and instinct; plants a law of vegetation; inanimate creatures a law of motion. A new creature hath a law put into his heart; *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, Jer. 31. 23,* cited by the apostle, *Heb. 8. 10.* It is called the law of the mind, *Rom. 7. 23,* it beginning first in the illumination of that faculty. As sin begun first in a false judgment made of the precept of God; *You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* Now as to this law put into

the heart, you may know what is meant by it in some propositions.

1. This law of the mind, or law written in the heart, is not wholly *the same with the law of nature*. * Some indeed tell us, that it is nothing but the law of right reason. But certainly they are mistaken, it is a law of grace. The law of nature was the law of a covenant of works; this law of the mind is the law of the covenant of grace. The law of nature is in all men; this law of grace only in some; the law of nature was in Paul before his conversion, this law of the mind was in him upon his conversion. The law of nature consists not of faith in a Mediator; but faith is a main part of the law of grace. The law of nature acquaints not a man with the knowledge of all sins, not with unbelief; this law of grace does; for the conviction of this, is a work of the Spirit; *Of sin, because they believe not in me, John 16. 8, 8.* The law of nature is the general work of the Mediator in all men, *who enlightens every man that comes into the world, John 1. 9.* This is the peculiar work of the the Mediator by his Spirit, in the hearts of those that believe; the law of nature does not oppose sin, as sin, this law of grace doth; the law of nature is no part of sanctification, for this is in men that are born of the flesh, are flesh still; but the law of the mind is a part of sanctification, and wars against the law of the members; there is indeed a war and a contest from the law of nature against some gross sins, but not against the law of sin in the members. As sin wars against the law of the mind, as a law of direction; so the law of the mind, or the law of grace, wars against sin, as it is a law which pretends to guide and order the ways of a man.

2. Yet it is the *restoring* of that law, which was the law of nature originally. It is a renewing in the heart that law, which was written in the heart of Adam, *That new man which after God is created in righteous-*

* Taylor's Exemp. preface, p. 39.

*ness and true holiness; Eph. 4. 24; or after God was created, κτισθέντα, alluding to that righteousness wherein Adam was created; lost by him, and restored by Christ; this righteousness which Adam had, was the first righteousness of the law. Holiness towards God, which includes the duties of the table. Righteousness, including the duties of the second table. And truth being added (as it may be referred both to holiness and righteousness) shows the sincerity of it, in the manner and the end of being holy to God, and righteous to man. This was the law written in the heart originally, which was defaced by the fall; and whatsoever relics there were of this law in man, were only upon the account of the mediation of Christ; it is this law which is new engraven in the soul by regeneration. God doth not say, I will write another law in their hearts, but *my law*; that which was my standing law, my law to Adam, and to your fathers, *Jer. 31. 33.* The law written in the heart is not substantially distinct from that in the nature of Adam. Man by his fall did blot this law, lost his righteousness, had an enmity in his heart to it, and to the very relics of it. He is not naturally *subject to the law*, nor can be, as it is the law of God, because of his enmity to God; the law of sin had taken place instead of it. Regeneration is a taking down the law of sin, and fixing the law of God in its due place and posture.*

3. This law is written in the heart *wholly*. The whole law; every command which hath the print of God upon it, is written there. As God wrote his whole law in tables of stone, so he writes the whole law in the *fleshy tables of the heart*, *2 Cor. 3. 3.* It is true holiness and righteousness; true, as to its essential and integral parts. God does not write one part of the law upon the heart, and leave out another; it is not a moiety of it, the impression of one command, and the defect of another. If it were not the law, something belonging to the essence of a new creature would be wanting; it would not be a new crea-

ture, because it would be a monster, wanting something necessarily requisite to the constitution of it; and would not be a new creature according to the original copy. Where there is an agreeableness in one nature to another, it is to the whole nature, the nature of the soul to the nature of the law.

4. This law written in the heart doth not make the outward law *useless*: for that is still a rule. This inward law written in the heart, is a conformity to the outward rule; and therefore is not a rule itself. The law in the heart is imprinted by the external word in the hand of the Spirit; and therefore to try the truth of the law within, we must have recourse to the law written. If a man hath notions of any human law, he must consult the law written, to know whether his notions of it be right, and whether his actions be according to the letter and reason of the law, or no: as the law of sin within a man is not the rule of judging of sin, but the law of God; so neither is the law of grace within the rule of judging good, but the word of God. The law within, though it be commensurate to the law in its essential parts, yet it is imperfect as yet; but a rule ought to be perfect, and so the written law is, *Psa.* 19. 7. and 119. 9. It is this law written in the word, that we are to take heed to, for the cleansing of our ways. *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.* When this writing of the law in the heart was promised, ver. 11, there was also an inward teaching promised; *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour saying, Know the Lord,* *Jer.* 51. 32, which is spoken in regard of the abundance of the knowledge which should be in the time of gospel light, above what was in the twilight of Jewish ceremonies: so that the weakest christian under the gospel knows more of God and his attributes in Christ, than the greatest Jewish doctor did before the coming of Christ.

This was not so understood by Christ, as if teaching others were utterly useless: for then why should he

institute apostles, pastors, teachers, &c. and promise to be with them to the end of the world, if this promise of inward teaching made outward teaching useless? In like manner, neither does the writing the law in the heart, make the outward written law useless, but rather it does establish and advance it, and the esteem of it. The outward law is the rule; as the model of a house is the rule by which a carpenter is to make a building, and to which he is to conform that idea he hath in his mind of it: but that idea or figure of it which he has in his mind, is to be suited to that rule which is prescribed to him in the outward pattern; and therefore that pattern is to be consulted with. The law of God is of eternal duration; and as it is a law of holiness and love of God, does oblige every reasonable creature, in what condition soever he be, whether of nature, grace, or glory.

But if it be enquired, wherein does this writing of the law in the heart consist?

I answer, 1. in an *inward knowledge* of the law, and *approbation* of it in the understanding. The knowledge of righteousness, and the being of the law in the heart, are put together as the proper character of the people of God; *Hearken to me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, Isa. 51. 5.* Lest they should think a knowledge were enough, he adds, in whose heart is my law: not in the head, but in the heart. There is in a renewed understanding, a principle teaching how to make use of the law. It is like the inward skill of a pilot, who guides the ship by the compass and rudder. The outward law is the compass by which we must steer; the inward law is the practical knowledge of this; an inward skill to make application of it to particular occasions. The word of God being a seed, doth, as every seed, produce a being like itself, and like that plant whose seed it is; from the seed of corn ariseth a grain of the same nature. This seed being sown first in the understanding, is there cherished, and grows up in prin-

ciples and thoughts agreeable to itself, whereby the mind becomes the *epistle of Christ*, *Psa.* 119. 167, and an ark to preserve the tables of the law; whence David speaks of his soul keeping God's testimonies, and not *forgetting them*, *Psal.* 119. 16. The new creature by its new light sees an amiableness in the law, a holiness in the precepts, and a filthiness in himself thereby.

2. It consists in an *inward conformity* of the heart to the law. The soul hath a likeness to the word and doctrine of the gospel within it; it is delivered into that mould; *You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, into which you were delivered*, *Rom.* 6, 17. He considers the gospel as a mould, and the Romans as a metal poured into it, and putting on the form of it. As melted metal poured into a mould, loses its former form, and puts on a new shape, the same figure with the mould into which it is poured: the soul which before was a servant of sin, and had the image of the law of sin, being melted by the Spirit, is cast into the figure and form of the law. As when a seal hath made its impressions upon wax, the stamp in the one answers exactly to the stamp on the other, put the seal on again, and they both will meet as close as if they were one body, the wax will fill every cavity in the seal; but put this seal to any impression made by another seal, there will be an inequality, the stamp on the seal and that on the wax will not close.

The law of sin and the law of God being contrary impressions, cannot close together; but the law of grace in the heart, and the law of God close, they being but one and the same stamp. So that when any command of God appears, a new creature finds something within it of kin to it; as a natural man finds something ready to close with sin upon the appearance of it. The heart answers to the law as a lock to a key, ward for ward; sometimes it may not answer, but resist, as a lock doth, because of some rust or some filth got up into it; but then it needs not a new making,

but a new cleansing, to answer exactly to the key of the law : so that as the Gentiles, *having not the law, are a law to themselves*, having it writ upon their minds in those notions common to mankind ; so the new creature, if he had not the written law, would be a law to himself. So natural is this conformity, that were there no law without, the renewed soul would naturally be carried out in the ways of holiness, 1 *Tim.* 1. 9.

The law, saith the apostle, *is not made for a righteous man*: it is not chiefly intended for the righteous, but for the unrighteous, who would not stir one step in any good action without it, and will hardly stir with it. There would be no need of any written law in a commonwealth, if all men had an exact justice and righteousness in their own minds, and did jointly conspire to the good of the community. But when disturbers of the peace and common welfare start up, there is need then of public laws to restrain them. But there is no need of a public enacting of a law for them that are good, because what the law enjoins, they do by their own judgment and inclination. So that what a new creature doth in observance of the law, is from natural freedom, choice, and judgement, and not by the force of any threatenings annexed to it.

It consists in a *strong propension* to the obedience of it. As there was a strong *impetus* in the old nature, inclining it to sin ; so there is a strong impulse in the new nature, biassing it to observe the commands of the law. In this respect it is chiefly called a *law written in the heart*, in regard of the efficacious virtue of this new nature, sweetly constraining and directly conducting to the performance of it. The law without us commands us ; the law within constrains us : * that enjoins a thing to be done ; this inclines us to the doing of it. The first law is written in the scripture, or in the conscience, whereby we judge those commands to be kept ; the other consists in the propension of love,

or faith working by love. As the impulse of concupiscence is called *the law of sin*, so the impulse of grace is called the law in the heart; not as a thing distinct from the law without, but only a counterpart of it; an indenture answering to the other. They are but two parts united between themselves, and compose one perfect law: one as the direction, the other as the practice: that lays the injunction, this embraces it; and as naturally from the disposition of the new nature, as he embraces the law of sin, from the disposition of the old. It is a powerful, operative law of the spirit of life, which sets us free from the *law of sin and death*; not a dead letter, but an active principle, quickening the heart to close with the law, and delivering it from that which was the great hinderance to it. As the Devil acts in *mens' hearts*, not personally, but by a principle in the heart, the law of sin; so doth the spirit of life, by the law of grace: for being writ by a living spirit, it is a living law. This is the chief intent of the whole new creation, to cause us to walk in God's statutes, *Ezek. 36. 26, 27. The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide, Psal. 37. 31.* The soul being thus evangelized, and spiritualized, may be said to do by nature the things contained in the gospel, as the Gentiles are said to do by nature the things contained in the law, *Rom. 2. 14*, because there was a law of nature engraven in them.

4. It consists in a *mighty affection* to the law. What is in the word a law of precept, is in the heart a law of love: what is in the one a law of command, is in the other a law of liberty. *Love is the fulfilling of the law, Gal. 5. 14.* The law of love in the heart, is the fulfilling the law of God in the spirit. It may well be said to be written in the heart, when a man doth love it. As we say, a beloved thing is in our hearts, not physically, but morally; as Calais was said to be in queen Mary's heart: they might have looked long enough, before they could have found there the map of the town; but grief for the loss of it killed her.

It is a love that is inexpressible. David delights to mention it in two verses together; *I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved: my hands will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved, Psal. 119. 47, 48*; and often in that Psalm he resumes the assertion.

Before the new creation, there was no affection to the law: it was not only a dead letter, but a devilish letter, in the esteem of a man: he wished it razed out of the world, and another, more pleasing to the flesh, enacted: he would be a law to himself. But when this is written within him, he is so pleased with the inscription, that he would not for all the world be without that law, and the love of it: whereas, what obedience he paid to it before, was out of fear, now out of affection; not only because of the authority of the lawgiver, but of the purity of the law itself. He would maintain it with all his might against the power of sin within, and the powers of darkness without him. He loves to view this law; regards every lineament of it, and dwells upon every feature with delightful ravishments. If his eye be off, or his foot go away, how does he dissolve in tears, mourn, and groan, till his former affection hath recovered breath, and stands upon its feet? If he finds not his heart answering the law, he longs after the precepts, as the prophet saith; *I have longed after thy precepts, quicken me in thy righteousness, Psal. 119. 40*. He longs to join hands again with the holiness of them. As his heart is inclined to obey it, so it is wounded upon any neglect of it, and never at ease, till he be reduced to his former delight in it. He hath no mind ever to part with it, because of its intrinsic goodness, as well as convenience for him. It is his pleasure, not his confinement; his ornament, not his fetter: he hates every thing that is contrary to it.

How doth Paul grieve and groan under *the body of death*, when he considered what opposition *the law in his members* made against *the law of his*

mind? The law in his members brought him into captivity to the law of sin: Then, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. 7. 23, 24; though he knew he was in part delivered from it. How does he long for a perfect redemption from his shackles, which hindered him from following the law of his delight! And he that never murmured at his sufferings, but could glory in persecutions and death for Christ, seems to be impatient, till he could hear the last expiring groan of this enemy: all which was the effect of his *delight in the law of God after the inward man*. And that this writing the law, doth principally consist in this affection, those two expressions, *putting the law into the inward parts, and writing it in the heart*, intimate. The nature of man being enmity against the law of God, the writing it argues, not a change of the law but a change of the frame of the heart to the law, that should be so fashioned, that the law should reign there, and all his affections subscribe to it. As the writing the law in the heart of Christ, was nothing else but the agreeableness of the mediatory law to him, and his *delight in it*, Psa. 40. 8, so it is with a new creature.

5. It consists in an *actual* ability to obey. Writing the law in the heart, implies a putting a power and strength into the soul, enabling it to run the ways of God's commandments, as well as to incline the heart and affections to them; the promise is made to the latter times: not but that the ancient patriarchs were regenerate, but not by the law, not by any covenant of works; this ability did not reside in the law, but was transferred to them from the gospel. In this respect it is called a letter, because it did only instruct the eye, or ear, when read, or heard; this teaches the heart; *that* a killing letter, *this* a quickening Spirit; *that* exacted the observance of its precepts, but writ nothing in the heart to answer it, but condemned upon neglect; this commands the observance of the law, and gives an ability evangelically to perform it. *That*

was a ministration of *condemnation*, this of *righteousness*, 2 Cor. 3. 6, 9. That could do no other but condemn, because it gave no intrinsic power to observe it. It is through Jesus Christ that we are enabled by virtue of this inward writing, to serve with our minds, the law of God, though in our flesh we be captivated by the law of sin. As an unregenerate man is dragged to any good, but willingly obedient to the motions of sin; so a regenerate man is sometimes under the power of sin, but is willingly obedient to the motions of grace. So that the law is written in the heart, in respect of the assent of the understanding, consent of the will, pleasure of the affections; in the understanding, by the clearness of the light of faith; in the will, by the heat of the fire of love. In the understanding there is a judicious approbation of it; in the will, a motion to it, closing with it, and an affection to keep it; and according to its ability, an endeavour to keep pace with it.

V. As there is a change, a vital principle, an habit, a law written in the heart; so *there is a likeness to God in the new creature*. Every creature has a likeness to something or other in the rank of beings: the new creature is framed according to the most exact pattern, even God himself. In this the form of regeneration consists. The new creature is begotten; begotten then in the likeness of God. As sin is the impression of Satan's image, which was drawn over all by the fall; so renewing grace is the impression of the image of God; for it is a quite contrary thing to corruption. This likeness to God was man's original happiness in creation, and is his restored happiness in redemption; *renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*, Col. 2. 10. His misery consisted in losing it; our felicity therefore doth consist in recovering it. Hence it is called a *divine nature* 2 Pet. 1. 4. Every thing receives its denomination from the better part, A man is denominated rational, though he hath both a sensitive principle common

with beasts, and a vegetative, or growing principle, common with plants; so a new creature is denominated divine, because grace, a divine principle, is superior in the soul. Every perfection in the creature is supposed to be essentially somewhere. Every impression supposes a seal that stamped it; every stream a fountain from whence it sprang; every beam a sun from whence it is shot. Grace being the highest perfection of the creature, must be somewhere essentially; and where can that be but in God? It must then have a resemblance to him, as a child to the father, the copy to the original. We are said to be *born of God*, 1 *John* 3. 9. Now to be born of any thing, is to receive a form like that which the generating person hath. But,

1. It is not a likeness to God in *essence*: it is no participation of the essence of God.* It is a nature, not the essence; a likeness in an inward disposition, not in the infinite substance, which is communicated by generation, only to the Son, and by procession to the Holy Ghost. The divine essence is incommunicable to any creature. Infiniteness cannot be represented, much less communicated. Man is no more renewed according to God's image, than he was at first *created according to it*, *Gen.* 1. 27; which was not a communication of the divine essence, but of a righteousness resembling the righteousness of God, according to the capacity of Adam's nature; which image of God in Adam, is by the apostle restrained to that of *righteousness and true holiness*, *Eph.* 4. 24. The likeness in a state of glory, is founded upon a *sight of God as he is*, 1 *John* 3. 2; which may more properly be meant of the seeing of Christ as he is in glory: for the apostle goes on in the discourse without naming of Christ; but without question, means him, when he saith, that *he was manifested to take away our sins*, ver. 5.

* *Naturale esse Dei*, is not communicated.

We shall be like him, as we shall see him; therefore not in essence. His essence is concluded by most, to be invisible, even in glory. How can finite creatures behold an infinite Being? He must be God that knows God's essence. We shall understand him in his affection, as a father; in his wise acts, as a governor; in his judicial acts, as a justifier; in his merciful acts, as a reconciler: we shall see him in all his relations to us. Such a vision we shall have, whatsoever it is, which shall transform us into as high a likeness to him, as a finite creature is capable of. There can be no participation of the substantial perfections of God, which are incommunicable: for then it would not be a participation, but an identity, oneness, or equality. God put in one letter, as the chiefest of his name *Jehovah*, π , which is twice repeated in it, into the names of Abraham and Sarai, reckoned, *Neh.* 9. 7, as one of his favours to Abraham; but not the whole name; that is incommunicable; and Jacob's name is changed to that of Israel, putting in בש , a communicable name of God.

2. Yet it is a *real* participation. It is not a picture, but a nature: it is divine. God does not busy himself about apparitions. It is a likeness, not only in actions, but in nature. * If God communicates to the creature, a singular participation of the divine vision, and divine love, why may he not also give some excellent participation of his nature? There is a nature; for there is something whereby we are constituted the children of God: a bare affection to God does not seem to do this. Love constitutes a man a friend, not a son and heir by generation. The apostle argues, *If children, then heirs*, *Rom.* 8. 17. He could not argue in a natural way, if friends, then heirs. And the scripture speaks of believers being the children of God, by a spiritual generation, as well as by

* Suarez de gra. lib. 6. cap. 12. Num. 3, 10.

adoption. So that grace, which doth constitute one a child of God, is another form whereby a divine nature is communicated. Generation is the production of one living thing by another, in the likeness of its nature; not only in the likeness of love; so is regeneration. Were not a real likeness attainable, why should those exhortations be, of being *holy as God is holy, pure as he is pure?* 1 *Pet.* 1. 15. 1 *John* 3. 3. The new creature receives the image of God; not as a glass receives the image of a man, which is only an appearance, no real existence; and though it be like the person, yet hath no communion with its nature: but as wax receives the image of the seal; which though it receives nothing of its substance, yet receives exactly the stamp, and answers it in every part: so the scripture represents it, *Ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise,* *Eph.* 1. 13. Something of God's perfections are in the new creature by way of quality, which are in God by way of essence. In a word: it is as real a likeness to God, as the creature is capable of, laid in the first draughts of it in regeneration, and completed in the highest measures in glory.

3. It is the *whole* image of God, which is drawn in the new creature. It is *the image of God,* *Col.* 3. 10; not a part: a foot, or a finger, is but the image of those parts, not of a man. The members in a child answer to those in a parent, that is but a chip from the body of his father, though not in so great a proportion. The image of a man hath not only the face, or eyes, but the other members. Though a christian may have one or two parts of this image, more beautiful than the rest; as a man may have a sparkling eye, that hath not a proportionable lip; yet he hath all the members of a man. The painter's skill appears in some lineaments more than in others. So the Spirit's wisdom appears in making some eminent in one grace, some in another, according to his good pleasure; yet the

whole image of God is imprinted there; it would be else not a likeness, but a monstrous birth in defect. *The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, Eph. 5. 9.* And therefore the immediate effect of the Spirit in the soul, is the engraving all goodness, righteousness, and truth in the essential parts of it. As God's nature is holy, his perfections holy, his actions holy; so holiness beautifies the nature, spirits the actions, and is writ upon all the endowments of a renewed man. There is an impression of the wisdom of God in the understanding, and of the holiness of God in the will.

4. It is more peculiarly a *likeness to Christ*, wherein we partake of his nature. He that doth righteousness is righteous, as Christ is righteous, *1 John 3. 7.* There is a real likeness to Christ in righteousness, though not an equal perfection. The new nature is a draught of Christ; something of Christ put into the soul; such a likeness to Christ, that it seems to be as another Christ; as the image of the sun seems to be another sun, in a pail of water; therefore called a *forming of Christ in us, Gal. 4. 19.* Not by any communication of his substance, either of the divine or human nature; but by conveying such affections into us, which bear a likeness to the affections of Christ. Hence we are exhorted to have *the same mind which Christ had; and to arm ourselves with the same mind;* which supposeth such a mind put into the new creature, which he is to excite and put into actual exercise. And the apostle speaks of a conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection. And God did *predestinate all his own to be conformed to the image of his Son, Rom. 8. 29.**

Jesus Christ conformed himself to us, by assuming the human nature: and God conforms us to Christ, by bestowing upon us a divine. Hence we are said to be the *seed of Christ, Isa. 53. 10.* Not a carnal

* *σχημῶφης*, of the same form and shape.

seed, as the Jews say; and therefore deny Christ to be the Messiah, because he left no posterity. Whereas seed is spiritually understood: as in the first promise, the seed of the serpent, or the devil. Devils do not beget, but metaphorically, as they instil their cursed principles into men. So Christ sows his principles in us, whereby we become his seed. Hence also renewed men are called *his fellows*, *Heb. 1. 9.* If fellows with him in the covenant, and fellows with him in glory, fellows also with him in his disposition of loving righteousness and hating iniquity. This disposition was the inward motive of his death, and the foundation of his advancement. Without this disposition we cannot be conformable to him in his death, and consequently not his fellows in his advancement. The new creature is a likeness to Christ; therefore called the *new man*; as the natural man is like to Adam, therefore called the *old man*. The new man and old man are titles of Christ and Adam, and transferred upon others by a figure.*

These are the heads and roots of the two distinct bodies of men in the world. All are in the old Adam by nature, and so partake of the old man. All believers are in the new Adam by faith, and so partake of the nature of the new man: as we did partake of Adam's nature by our natural birth, so we partake of the nature of Christ by our spiritual; by the one we have the *image of the earthy*, by the other the new creature hath the *image of the heavenly*, *1 Cor. 15. 48, 49*; the one derives sin, the other righteousness: they both imprint their image according to the quality of their extraction. Christ is full of purity, righteousness, charity, patience, humility, truth, and, in a word, all the parts of holiness; then the form and image of Christ in the new creature, can be no other than a lively representation of those divine qualities: a soul glittering with goodness, humility, &c. which

* Metonymia causæ pro effectu.

the apostle comprehends in two words, *righteousness and true holiness*. Therefore if there be not a likeness to Christ in the frame and qualities of our souls, we are not born of him. No man will say an ox, or a sheep, or a dog descends from Adam, because they have not the likeness, shape, and qualities of Adam; neither can any man without such a likeness to Christ in faith, humility, patience, love, obedience, and minding the glory of God, number himself in the spiritual seed of Christ. He retains the nature poisoned by the serpent, creeping upon the earth, feeding upon the dust; not the nature formed by the eternal Spirit.

5. It is a likeness to *the Spirit*, which is the immediate cause of it. Therefore the new creature is called *spirit* in the abstract; as a natural man is called *flesh* in the abstract; *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, John 3. 6.* As that which is born of the flesh, is like to flesh in its nature; so that which is born of the Spirit, is like to the Spirit in its nature; as light in the air being the natural effect flowing from the sun, is like to that light which is in the sun: its relishes, delights, breathings, are according to its spiritual original. Its motions, purposes, dispositions, are like those of the Holy Ghost, of whom it is born. The principles and impressions in the nature must be agreeable to those the Spirit hath. The Spirit is a Spirit of holiness, grace, love, and zeal to the glory of God; his office is to exalt and glorify Christ. If we are renewed, then we shall have the same draught in our hearts, the same design, the fleshly principle will be changed into spiritual. They will be habitual too, as the frame of the Holy Spirit is; a natural man may do some acts that look like spiritual, by fits and starts; but there is no settled principle. Whereas the spirit in a new creature is a spirit of meekness, and curbs the passions; a spirit of humility, and overthrows pride; a spirit of zeal, and fires the heart; a spirit of power, and arms the soul against sin; a

holy spirit, and therefore cleanses it; an heavenly spirit, and therefore elevates it.

If it be further inquired, wherein does this likeness to God chiefly *consist*;

I answer, 1. In a likeness of *affections*. God is no bodily shape; we cannot be like him in our bodies, but in our souls, as they are spirits: but if there be a dissimilitude of affection and disposition, the unlikeness to God is greater than a likeness to him in point of the natural being. There is no draught of this image in us, unless we have a conformity of affections to God; it is then chiefly evidenced by a delighting in him, by faith and love, wherein we bear a resemblance to him in his affection to himself; by delighting in his image in others, wherein we imitate his affection to his creatures. He that loves not that image of God which is visible, cannot love the invisible original, 1 *John* 4. 12, 20; and so having no likeness to God in his affection, can have no likeness to him in his nature. And the apostle positively affirms, that *he that loves, is born of God*, 1 *John* 4. 7. The new creature extends its arms to every thing which hath a resemblance of that whose image it bears.

The divine nature is chiefly seen in the objects of the affections: when they are set upon the same objects, and in a like manner as God's and Christ's are. When we grieve most for sin, for this grieves the Spirit; when we desire most an inward holiness, this God most longs for; *O that there were such an heart in them!* When we hate sin as God hates it, because of the inward filthiness; when we love grace as God loves it, because of its native beauty; when we can love God and Christ above all the world, and other things in order to him and his glory; when we can trust Christ with all our concerns, as God trusts him with his glory; then, and not till then, there is an image of God in us, which God values above all the world. When the soul is thus touched and quickened by grace, she can no more strip herself of

the object and manner of her affections, than she can of the affections themselves. And when she reaches out herself to all that is good, and hath a complacency in it, it is her happiness, because it is the great likeness to the spring of happiness. When we have the like affections with God, we have in our measure a like happiness and blessedness with God.

2. In a likeness of *actions*. Men by sin are *alienated from the life of God*; by restoring grace then they are brought to have communion with God in his life, to live as God lives; by nature men live the life of beasts and devils; by grace they come to live the life of Christ. If he lives then the life of God, he must be conformable in his actions to the acts of God. No nature is stripped of affections and actions proper to it; it would be else a picture without breath, a body without motion, a lifeless colour. The divine image is not a painted statue, but an active being. The nearer any thing approaches in its nature to the fountain of life, the more of liveliness and activity it must needs partake of. The communicable perfections of God are stamped upon the soul as a pattern to imitate, and as a principle to quicken. A new creature acts like God, as melted and inflamed gold will act after the nature of fire, by the assistance of that quality communicated by the fire to it; so does the soul by that divine quality it partakes of.* It is as impossible that this image of God can produce any thing but divine acts, as that the image of the sun in a burning-glass should produce a darkness and coldness in the air.

There will be the manifestation of the life of Christ in the motions of our soul, as the apostle speaks, in case of sufferings for him, there will be in our bodies, *2 Cor. 4. 10.* Natural men *are called* the devil's children, because they resemble him in nature and works, *egging* on to sin, and delighting themselves in

* *Intellectus reformatus in Deum agit tan quam Deus, say the Platonists.*

their *own and others' iniquities*, *John* 8. 44 ; so renewed men are God's children, because they live the life of God, and abound in *the works of God*, *John* 8. 44; *1 Cor.* 15. 58. As there is the same nature, and the same Spirit which Christ had, there will be a following of him in his works ; all creatures of the same species have the same instinct, the same nature, the same acts that the first creature of that kind had originally in its creation. Grace being a new excellency advancing the soul to a higher state, endues it with a more noble kind of operation. Nothing is lifted up to a more perfect state of being, but in order to a more perfect manner of acting. If a beast should be elevated to the nature of man, would you then expect from him the actions of a beast still? And can any have the implantation of the divine nature, who hath only the actions of a man, which bear no resemblance to God?

3. This likeness to God consists principally in a likeness to him in *holiness*. It is only *he that doeth righteousness, is born of him* ; *If you know that he is righteous, you know that every one that doeth righteousness, is born of him*, *1 John* 2. 29. It is by this the children of God are manifest from the children of the devil, *1 John* 3. 10, in doing righteousness. If we are unlike to God in this, we are like him in nothing ; God has not a pretence of holiness, but a real purity. He that has not *escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, is no *partaker of the divine nature* ; the apostle puts that as a necessary qualification, *2 Pet.* 1. 4. If by afflictions good men are partakers of God's holiness, much more by regeneration. *He chastened us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*, *Heb.* 12. 10. If God aim in his corrections at the bringing his people to partake with him in holiness, as a father does at the reformation of his child, that he may be a follower of his virtues ; much more does God aim at it in regeneration, when a spirit of holiness is infused

into the soul. The new creation is a drawing this excellency of God in the soul. If any attribute lift up his head above another, it is this; in this we chiefly are to imitate him; this is the greatest evidence of the divine nature. By sin we *come short of that which is the glory of God*; by the renewing of the soul we attain the glory of God; that is, attain a state of holiness, and at last a perfection of it, a communion with him in holiness here, and a full enjoyment of it hereafter. Whatsoever our fancies, our hopes, our presumptions are, if this be not drawn in our soul, if we have not an internal holiness, we are not new creatures, and therefore not in Christ.

PART V.

THE INSTRUCTIONS DERIVED FROM THE DOCTRINE.

The subjects of regeneration few in number—Partial evidence of it among professors—Not a change of opinion—Not a moral change—It is in restraining grace—This change is not in sudden and transient affections—The excellence of the new creature—Much to be esteemed and valued—Sins of the regenerate, how aggravated.

IF regeneration be such an inward change, a vital principle, a law put into the heart, the image of God and Christ in the soul; then,

I. How few in the world are truly new creatures? Is the law transcribed in many men's lives? Nay, can we all read it copied in our own hearts? Cannot many see the image of the devil sooner than the image of God in their own souls? Is not the law of sin writ in text letters, and with many flourishes; when the law of God is writ in characters hardly legible, and crowded into a narrow room? How many are changed from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, and the old nature still remaining in its full strength, and the body of death more vigorous than twenty or thirty years ago?

Changed years, and unchanged hearts, are a very sad spectacle.

Profane men are numerous. None will offer to rank these in the number of new creatures. Such impure souls are no branches of Christ, nor habitations for him; we read of the devil in swine, but never of our Saviour in swinish souls. Are such regenerate? Can brambles be ever accounted vines, or thistles fig-trees? These rather look like hellish than divine creatures; diabolical, not godlike natures. A devotedness to the sins of the flesh is inconsistent with the circumcision made by Christ; *Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, Col. 2. 11*: that is, the body of sins which exert themselves in the flesh or natural body; whereas, such have the body of sin, with an activity in every member of it. * Is the image of Christ in such men? Is not he meek as a lamb? are not they fierce as lions? Is not he holy, and they defiled with intemperance? Did not he labour for nothing but the glory of his Father, and the salvation of souls? and they mind nothing but the dishonour of God, and the destruction of themselves and others. Did not he do good to his enemies, and they scarcely spare their friends? Alas! with this contrariety, how can they pretend the image of Christ, when they have nothing but what looks like the image of his enemy the devil?

Is not the gospel counted, as great a foolishness by such, as at the first times of its publishing? Are not the great mysteries of God, and the contrivances of eternity, entertained with coldness, and sometimes with scoffs, and the word, the great instrument of this change, unregarded? Are such new creatures, that contain the very means to attain it? Surely they are so far from being near the kingdom of God, that they are in the very suburbs of hell. Is indulging base lusts against the light of nature, a contempt of God's

* Daille.

law and authority, the nature of Christ? Were any such spots upon our Saviour's garment? Is this to be like him who was holy, harmless, separate from sin and sinners?

Among *professors*, is there much evidence of a new creation? When men shall say, All that the Lord speaks to us we will do, has not God as great occasion to say, as he did of old, *O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments! Deut. 5. 24.* We may find a change of language in some, a change of outward actions in others; but how few are there among many, who stand up before God with the breath of life? Here and there a man or woman, wherein God may see the image of his own nature. How few are they with whom Christ can shake hands, and justly call them his fellows! Christ may be in the mouth, and the devil formed in the heart; the name of Christ may be upon them, and the nature of Christ not in them. They may be born of the will of man in a religious education, but not born of the will of God in a spiritual regeneration. Is it not a graceless christianity in many men, a faith without holiness, a christianity without Christ? Regeneration is never without faith, love, and righteousness; they depend upon grace as the property upon the form; wherever the new creation is, these are, for they are the qualities created; wherever they are not, there is nothing of a new creature, let the pretences be never so splendid.

There may be a nearness to the kingdom God by profession, when there is no right to it for want of regeneration. Instead of humility, according to our Saviour's pattern, doth not *pride compass men as a chain? Psal. 73. 6.* Counting that their ornament, which is the strength of their old nature. Instead of patience, roaring passions; instead of meekness, boiling anger; instead of love, a glowing hatred. How few then are renewed? But few shall be saved, and therefore few regenerate. How little is the report

of a likeness to God, believed by the incredulous world? How few are the strivings of any towards heaven? Most lie quiet without any such motions, like the dust on the ground, unless some stormy affliction raise them a little towards heaven, whence they quickly fall back to their old place.

2. It informs us, that a dogmatical change, or change of *opinion*, is not this new creature. It is not, if any man change his opinion from Gentileism to christianity, he is a new creature; but if any man be in Christ, by a vital participation from union with him. As men generally place saving faith in dogmatical assents, so they place the new creation in a change of opinion, as well from truth to error, as from error to truth, though there be no spiritual knowledge of God, nor internal cordial closing with the gospel, nor practice of it. Such a change may endue the head with a knowledge which never gently slides down to the affections. It may indeed have some influence upon the life, as this or that principle comes nearest to, or is divine truth, and is settled as an opinion in the soul; yet this great change may not be wrought. That is but a change in the head, this in the heart; that of opinion, this of affection; that perfects the understanding, this both the understanding, and will, and the whole soul.

There is a natural desire of knowledge, but a natural aversion from grace; whence this change becomes easy, the new creature change difficult. A hot contriving head may have a cold and sapless heart. A head informed by the knowledge of truth, may be without a heart enlivened by the Spirit of truth. A head changed in opinion only, will descend into the bottomless pit, when the least grain of renewing grace shall not receive so much as a singe from those flames. A change from error to truth, without a heart framed to the truth, does but more settle a man upon his lees, and makes him not only more regardless, but opposite to a true change to God; it stores up wrath for

him, and his very judgment will be a witness for the condemnation of his practice. The knowledge of God will not justify, but condemn a practical denial of him ; but for all that, they are *abominable*, *Tit. 1. 16.*

This new creature change is not from one doctrine to another, barely considered as doctrine ; but a change to the gospel in the main intendment of it, as it is *a doctrine according to godliness*, *1 Tim. 6. 3.*, as it may affect, purify, and direct the soul in its motion. And by the way, observe this ; whenever you are solicited to a change of opinion, consider the truth of it by this rule, whether it have a tendency to encourage and promote internal godliness ; since this doctrine of regeneration was the first gospel lesson taught, to which all succeeding truths refer as to their end and centre. The apostle tells us what the issues of all such doctrines, that refer not to this, are, *pride, dotting about questions, envy, strife, railings, and evil surmisings*. A heap of notions may consist with a body of death in its full strength, but a spirit of grace cannot ; a notionalist may speak great things, but a new creature acts them. Great speculations only are but leaves without fruit, like cedars that by their shadows may give a refreshment, but have no fruit to fill the soul hungering after righteousness.

3. *Morality* is not this new creature change. That is, moral honesty, freedom from gross vices, &c. I have before spoken something about it, shewing it insufficient, when I handled the necessity of regeneration ; we cannot speak too much against it, it being a soft pillow, from whence many slide insensibly into destruction. How many upon this account think themselves new creatures, who are yet deeply under the image of Satan ; and though they have blown off some dust from the law of nature, yet never had a syllable of the law of grace writ in their hearts ? Nay, the image of the devil may be more deeply engraven in a

soul, whose life is free from an outward taint. Profane men express more of the beast: a civil and moral conversation may have more of the devil and serpent within, in spiritualized wickedness.

Yet morality is to be *valued*. It is a comely thing among men, a beauty to human societies, satisfaction to natural conscience, security to the body, example to others; men are to be applauded for it, and encouraged in it. It is a fruit of Christ's mediation, left for the preservation of human societies, without which the world would be a mere bedlam and shambles; the works of kindness, justice, mercy, love, pity, &c. are useful and commendable. It is a thing which our Saviour loved, yet not with such a love as eternally to reward it; he looked upon the young man with *some affection*, *Mark* 10. 21, but scarce upon the pharisees without anger and disdain.

However we must not set the crown belonging to grace, upon the head of it, and place it in a throne *equal to that of the new creation*. It is too amiable for men to be beaten off from it; yet with a just reason we may persuade them to arise to a higher elevation. It is a curious paint, a delightful picture, an useful artifice, but not a vital principle; a glow-worm is a lovely light, yet it is not a star. We press not men to throw off morality, but to advance it, to exchange it for Christ, that their moral virtues may commence christian graces. It is an elevation near the kingdom of God, not a translation into the kingdom of God; it is nature improved, not nature renewed; it is a well-coloured picture without a principle of life; an outward resemblance, not an *inward power*, *2 Tim.* 3. 5, a form of godliness; as a change that is made upon cloth in the draught of a picture, but no change in it by the conveyance of life. For morality

Removes not the body of death. It is a cutting away the outward luxuriences, not the inward root. It removes the stench and putrefaction, not the death;

an embalmed carcase is as much dead as a putrified one, though not so loathsome. It removes not that wherein the strength of sin lies, though it doth somewhat of the stench of sin. It may check those degenerate lusts inconsistent with the peace of natural conscience, but not heal the corrupt nature. It may be a change from scandalous to spiritual sins ; from vanity in the outward life, to vanity in the mind ; from debauched practices, to a vain-glorious and envious spirit ; *Henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, Eph. 4. 17. 18.* By the Gentiles from whom the apostle would have the Ephesians differenced, he means not the lower sort, but the whole rank, ver. 21 ; there was a truth in Jesus which they had been taught ; he makes no distinction between the looser rabble, and the professors of wisdom, whom he calls *fools, Rom. 1. 22* ; the followers of the divine (as they called them) philosophers, were alienated from the life of God, and walked in the vanity of their minds.

The new man he exhorts them to put on, was another kind of thing than what the greatest moralists among the heathen were acquainted with. It was at best human, not divine ; an old nature purified, not a new implanted ; or as the apostle phraseth it, a *walking in the vanity of their mind, in the darkness of their understandings*, though not in the vanity of gross actions. It can never remove that body of death which was introduced into the world, while this outward morality stood. What immorality against the light of nature do you find in Adam ? He did break a positive command in eating the forbidden fruit ; you find nothing of drunkenness, lying, swearing ; his great sin was inward pride and unbelief ; nothing of those sins, the freedom from which you boast of, and rest on. Some would make Adam guilty of the breach of every command in the moral law ; virtually I confess they may ; expressly I do not see how they can ; and

also virtually the highest mere moralist is guilty of the breach of the whole; yet all his morality after the breach of this one command, could not preserve him in paradise; nor all the morality without a new nature, restore you to it. You may have Adam's morality with Adam's corruption; a freedom from gross vices, with a heap of spiritual sins in your hearts, as Adam had; but not a true righteousness without the New Adam, the quickening spirit.

Therefore the *highest morality without a new creation, is but flesh*: all men out of Christ agree in a fleshly nature. It is the highest thing in the rank of flesh but it is not yet mounted to spirit. Water heated to the highest pitch, is but water still; and morality in the greatest elevation of it, is but refined flesh; an old nature in a higher form. A prophane man reduced to a philosophical morality, is putrified flesh reduced to some sweetness, endued with a fresh colour, but wanting life as much as before: it is an old nature new mended. But a new creature is Christ formed in the soul. Moral virtue colours the skin, renewing grace enlivens the heart; *that* changes the outward actions, *this* the inward affections; *that* paints the man, *this* quickens him; *that* is a change indeed in the flesh, not of the flesh into Spirit; it is a new action, not a new creation. There is a difference indeed among men in this respect; as there is of cleanly lambs from a filthy swine, or a ravenous wolf, yet both are in the rank of beasts. There seems to be a difference in the wickedness and malice of devils; our Saviour tells us of a kind that are *not cast out but by fasting and prayer*, *Matt. 17. 21*; intimating, that there are other kinds of them, not altogether so bad, or so strong; yet all agreeing in one common diabolical nature: as there is a difference in gracious men, one shining like a star, another of a lesser light; yet all agree in the nature of light, and light in the Lord. So though there be a difference among men, in point of moral virtue, yet all agree in the nature of

flesh; *that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, John 3. 6.* Let it be what it will, a Nicodemus as well as Judas, it is flesh, a more refined sensuality, an animal life.

It must needs be differenced from the new creature, *because its birth is different.* Moral virtue is gained by human industry, natural strength, frequent exercises: It is made up of habits, engendered by frequent acts. But regeneration is an habit infused, which grows not upon the stock of nature, nor is it brought forth by the strength of nature: for man being flesh, cannot prepare himself to it. *That* may be the fruit of education, example, philosophy; *this* of the Spirit: *that* is a fruit of God's common grace, *this* of his special grace: *that* grows upon the stock of self-love, not from the root of faith, and a divine affection: *that* is like a wild flower in the field, brought forth by the strength of nature; *this* like a flower in the garden, transplanted from heaven, derived from Christ, set and watered by the Spirit. And therefore the other being but the work of nature, cannot bear the characters of that excellency, which the affections planted by the Spirit do. *That* is the product of reason, *this* of the Spirit; *that* is the awakening of natural light, *this* the breaking out of spiritual light and love upon it: *that* is the excitation of an old principle, *this* the infusion of a new; *that* arising from sleep by the mere touch of conscience, *this* a rising from death by the breath of the Spirit, working a deep contrition, and making all new.

Morality differs from the new creature, in regard of the *contractedness* of the one, and the *extensiveness* of the other. *That* is in part a purifying of the flesh, *this* a purging both of *flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. 7. 1*; *that* binds the hands, *this* clears the heart; *that* purgeth the body, *this* every part of the soul; *that*, at the best, is but oil in the lamp of life, *this* oil both in lamp and vessel: *that* is a change of outward postures, modes, and fashion of walking, *this* of nature, heart, and spirit; *that* seems to be a dislike of some sins, *this*, of

all. If any thing in moral honesty be given to God, it is but a certain part ; the greatest and best is kept back from him. *That* may be a casting away some iniquity, but not making a new heart, when both are commanded together ; *Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit, Ezek. 18. 31.* *That* is a casting away the loathsome works of the flesh, *this* a new root to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

Morality finally differs from the new creature in the *immediate principle of it*, and its tendency. *That* is a cleansing the outward flesh in the fear of man, out of reverence to superiors, as it is said of Jehoshaphat, he did that which was right, while he was under the awful instructions of Jehoiada, *2 Kings 12. 2.* *This* is a *perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1.* *That* is an outward reformation from the hearing of the word ; some acts materially performed from the newness of the thing, *John 5. 35.* *this* from a judicious and hearty approbation of the law and will of God : *that* arises from a natural love to reason, justice, equity ; *this* consists of love to God ; *that* avoids some sins, because they are loathsome, *this*, because they are sinful : *that* tends not to God for himself, but for something extraneous to him : it is an acting for self, not for the praise of God. The actions of unregenerate morality, as well as loathsome prophaneness, are to gratify the flesh in some part of it : they all meet in that point, as the clearest brooks as well as the most rapid and muddy streams, run to feed the sea.

Well then : deceive not yourselves ; conclude not yourselves new creatures by your moral honesty : It will not follow, that because you have some virtues, you have therefore true grace ; but it will follow, that if you are new creatures, and have faith and love, you have all graces in the root ; and they will appear in time, though they may lie hid a while in that seminal principle : the greater virtues contain the less, but the less do not infer the greater.

4. It will certainly follow from hence, that *restraints* are not this new creature. Restraining grace, and renewing grace, are two different things; the one is a withholding; *I withheld thee from sinning against me, Gen. 20. 6*: the other an enlivening with a free Spirit against it. Restraint may be from a chastisement, attended also with something of natural conscience. Abimelech had some natural integrity in his conscience, not to meddle with another man's wife, which God acknowledges; *I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee*: Yet without this restraint by a punishment, this natural integrity might have been baffled by the temptation. Restraints may spring from the law in the hand of the magistrate, when it does not spring from the law of God in the heart.

Men may love that which they do not act; at least they may love it in others, though not in themselves, for some extrinsic considerations; and wish they had as fair a way to commit it, as others have. They may hate what they practise. Do all that hear the word, love the word, hide it in their hearts, and let it sink down into the bottom of their souls? Do all that abstain from sin, loathe what they abstain from? The restraints of many being barely outward restraints, are no more arguments of regeneration, than God's withholding the devils by the chain of his powerful providence, is a sign of the new creation of them. The damned are hindered from committing many of those sins, which were their pleasure upon the earth: it is not a change of their disposition, but of their condition. Neither punishments in hell, nor punishments upon the earth, alter the nature; though after lying a thousand years in hell, they should have leave to dwell upon the earth again, they would have the same inclinations, without an inward change.

Do we not see it daily in men's afflictions, though the sense of the smart checks a little those inclinations, yet when that sense is extinguished, those inclinations

bud forth afresh? The bare pruning a tree, makes it bear more fruit of the same kind, as long as the root remains, rather than diminishes it: *Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, Isa. 1. 5.* While the head is sick, and the heart faint, though there may be a weakness to act some sins under the stroke, yet afterwards the revoltings are more violent many times than they were before. The best that restraints work of themselves, is but a cautiousness to sin more warily. The act may be repressed, while the habit remains.

5. A serious fit of *melancholy*, or a *sudden start of affections*, is not this work of the new creature. It is an habit, a law written in the heart; not a transient pang, or a sudden affection; not a skipping of fancy, or a quick sparkling of passion; but a new nature, a divine frame spreading itself over every faculty; knowing God in our understandings, complying with him by our wills, aspiring to him by a settled and perpetual flame of our affections, rising heavenwards like the fire upon the altar, conforming ourselves to him in the whole man, a denial of whole self for God. It is not a working of the imagination, or a melancholy vapour, which may quickly be removed, or a flash of joy and love; but a serious humility, a constant grief under the remainder of corruption yet unextirpated; a perpetual recourse to God, and delight in him through Jesus Christ. Are your affections raised sometimes to God? and are they not oftentimes raised higher to objects extrinsical to God? Such affections may arise rather from the constitution of the body, than alteration of the soul. They are but *a taste of the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, Heb. 6. 4. 5.* A taste, and no more; and is but a transient work.

The *object* about which our affections are stirred, may be divine; yet the operation but merely natural. May not sometimes affections be stirred much at the hearing the sufferings of our Saviour pathetically ex-

pressed, yet only out of a natural compassion, from an agreeable impression upon the fancy? The story of Joseph in the pit, and Christ upon the cross, may be heard with the same workings of passion. And may not the same be done at a well-humored play, or at the hearing a report of the lamentable death of a Turk, or heathen, pathetically expressed? These are but the workings of natural spirits. Some affections are as moveable as quicksilver, upon the least touch; they sweat like marble in moist weather, but resemble it also in hardness. You do not find the affections to be the chief seat of the law. This would be as to write letters upon melted wax, or running water: but the tenor of the covenant runs upon the mind; *I will put my law into their minds, Heb. 8. 8, 10.* And when God works upon the mind, the affections will attend the dictates of that, and the motions of the will. But a work upon the affections only, is like water in a sponge, easily sucked up, and upon the least compression, squeezed out. These may be where there is no root of grace; they suddenly rise, and suddenly vanish.

When unrooted notions are received only into the fancy, without any illumination of the understanding, or determination of the will, the affections to them will be as volatile as the fancy which entertained them. Those *that received the word with a sudden joy*, were as suddenly offended for want of a root: *anon with joy receives it, by and by he is offended, Matt. 13. 20, 21.* The word translated *anon*, and *by and by*, *ἐπιθίς*, is the same, a lightning of affection, and a sudden vanishing. Therefore this is not the new creature, sudden affections, or a melancholy fit. The law of God seated in the heart, mind, and will; though a constant course of affection, is a very good character to judge of the new creature.

6. It informs us of the *excellency* of the new creature. How excellent is this new creature? It is a change, a divine nature, a likeness to God, an excel-

lency above that of the greatest moralist under heaven. The Apostle calls it a change *from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. 3. 18, implying, that the first change wrought upon the soul, is glorious, and a new creature excellent in its first make, more glorious in its progress, inconceivably glorious when God shall put his last hand to the completing of it. Regeneration is more excellent than creation. It is more noble to be formed a son of God by grace, than made a man by nature: nature deforms, grace beautifies. By nature we are the sons of Adam; by the new nature, the members of Christ. As grace excels nature, and Christ surmounts Adam; so much more excellent is the state of a christian, a real christian, above that of a man. Can there be a greater excellency, than to have a divine beauty, a formation of Christ, a proportion of all graces, suited to the imitable perfections of God? Man is an higher creature than others, because he hath an higher principle: a life of reason is more noble than that of sense. To live by sense, is to play the part, and live the life, of brutes: to live by reason, is to live the life of a man: but he that lives by the Spirit, lives the life of God, answers the end of his creation, uses his reason, understanding, will, affection, for God, by whom they were first bestowed; acts more nobly, lives more pleasantly, than the greatest angel could do without such a principle. A new creature exceeds a rational creature, considered only as rational, more than a rational does a brute. The apostle makes a manifest distinction between the *natural*, or the *ψυχικός*, the *rational*, and the *spiritual man*, 1 Cor. 2. 14, 15. A man with the richest endowments, is no more to be compared in excellency with a regenerate man, than the top of a craggy mountain is with a well-dressed garden. That must needs be excellent, the forming of which is the end of all God's ordinances in the world, the end of the Spirit's being among the sons of men, the end of keeping up of mankind, the end of his patience in forbearing his punishment upon con-

tempt of the gospel. The end of his preserving the world, is to form Christ in the heart: and when the last new creature is formed, God has no more to do in the world. When all that are given to him, shall come to believe, Christ shall then come *to be admired in them*; 2 *The*s. 1. 10. He does not come, therefore, till all his chosen ones are brought in, to believe in him; for then he would not be admired by all those that are saints in his purpose. This therefore must needs be excellent. One new creature is more excellent than the whole unrenewed world, with their choicest ornaments. It was never pronounced of them, that they were partakers of the divine nature.

7. How much therefore should new creatures *be esteemed and valued*? Is any thing, next to God, more worthy our esteem than that which bears his image? Is any thing, next to a crucified Christ, glorified in heaven, more worthy our valuation than Christ formed in the heart of a believer? What esteem have men had for those who have had tempers like to some heroes, some generous and useful men in the world? How much more respect should be given to them that bear the characters of God upon them, and have communion with God, and Christ, and the Spirit, in their nature? If the dead image of God in a natural man, ought to be respected, much more the living image of God in a renewed man. If a picture is to have respect, much more the life. To slight them therefore, redounds to the slighting that infinite perfection, whose image it is. They are his living images, sent into the world to represent him. He then that disesteems them for that work, disesteems him that wrought and engraved them, by the same rule, that he that despised the disciples, despised Christ, and the Father that sent him, *Luke* 10. 16. *He therefore that despiseth you, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given us his holy Spirit*, 1 *The*ss. 4. 8. Yet no better must be expected here: for the contracted spirit of the world,

can love no other birth but its own, no other similitude but what draws near unto it: *If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you, John 15. 19.* The copy can expect no better usage than the original. The nearer any approach in likeness to Christ, the more they will be exposed to contempt and scorn in the world.

8: If the new creature be such a thing as you have heard, then the sin of a regenerate man hath a *greater aggravation* than the sins of any in the world. If you slip into sin, the sins of the whole unregenerate world have not so great a blackness. It is true, a new creature may, and does sin: for though a new man is created in him with all his members, and essential and integral parts, yet the body of death does remain still with all its members, and a seed-plot still, though not in the same strength and fruitfulness as before: for the apostle Paul doth not complain of a member of death, or a piece of sin, but the whole body of it, and the *law of sin in his members, Rom. 7.* It seems it did reside there still; and so it does in all the renewed, though but faint and feeble, an old man indeed, growing older every day, losing its teeth and strength, less able to bite, less able to assault.

Yet sometimes a new creature may fall into sin, but not without great aggravation. For other men sin against natural, you against spiritual principles; others sin against an habit of common notion, you against an habit of divine grace. A natural man sins against the light of God in his conscience, a renewed man against the *life* of God in his heart.* Others sin against a Christ crucified, and risen from the grave; he sins against a Christ new-formed, and risen in his heart. Others sin against the law of God in the word, he against the law written in his mind

* Gurnal, part 2. p. 218, 219.

and word too. Such cast dirt upon the Spirit's work, cross the end of so noble a piece, bring a thief into the Spirit's temple, and grieve the Holy Spirit, who instructed him better. Whenever you sin, it must cost you more grief, because your sins are more grievous; and you must grieve the more for them, because the Spirit is grieved by them. Grief for sin is a standing grace in the new creature, and part of a likeness to the Spirit of God, whatsoever some men dream to the contrary.

PART VI.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE REGENERATE.

Their relationship to the Trinity—Their delight in God—The foundation of their happiness—Their pleasures in contemplating the great change wrought in their souls—They anticipate perfection of conformity to the divine image—Their consolations in the troubles of the world—In temptations—Freedom from the fear of falling away—Weak grace victorious over strong corruption—A sense of regeneration the best antidote against the fear of death.

THERE is ground of joy unspeakable and full of glory that results from this. Are you of this new creation that I have been discoursing of? Then take your portion of comfort. The jewel of comfort belongs only to the cabinet of grace. It is fit you should have the comforts of heaven in your hearts, who have a fitness for heaven in your nature. The day of the new birth was a happy day, to be brought from under the rule of sin and death in it, to the rule of the Spirit of God and life in it; from bearing fruit to death, to bringing forth fruit to God and everlasting life: if sin be a torment to the soul that

produced it, no joy can reside in an unregenerate spirit; if sin be the soul's rack in its own nature, grace must be its pleasure; for it carries as much contentment and satisfaction in its bowels, as sin doth disquietness and sorrow.

1. You have, by the new creation, a *relation to the blessed Trinity*. Such are the sons of God, the seed of Christ, the temple of the Spirit; what a connexion is there between you and the Three Persons? God in Christ, and Christ in you, that you may be made *perfect in one*, *John 17. 23*. God in Christ reconciling the world; you in Christ reconciled to God. God in Christ, as a Father in a Son; you in Christ as members in the body; Christ in you, as a head in the body; the Spirit in you as an informing and enlivening principle. It makes you related to the Father as his friends, by the ceasing of your enmity: to the Son, as his propriety, for then *you are his*; to the Spirit, as the tutor of you, and inhabitant in you; all implied, *Rom. 8. 8, 9, 10*.

By your former birth you were children of wrath; by this, children of God; by that, partakers of the serpentine nature of the destroyer; by this, partakers of the divine nature of your Creator and Redeemer; by nature you descended from the loins of Adam, and thereby were related to all the corruptions of the world; by the new birth you are descended from the *Son of God*, and *counted to the Lord for a generation*, *Psa. 22. 30*, and thereby related to all the perfection of heaven: as really descended from Christ by a spiritual, as from Adam by a natural generation. What an overflowing comfort is this? To be a king's son is a higher privilege than merely to be his subject; subjects have protection, sons affection; subjects partake of the kindness of the prince, sons of his nature: as a son he hath a right to the inheritance of the father, as a subject not. Men are subjects by covenant, though born of others; sons by generation; by being a new creature, the regenerate man acquires a more noble rela-

tion, than by being a creature. 'That relation that he lost by a prodigal corruption, is restored to him in a more excellent way by his spiritual regeneration.

2. If you be new creatures, you are *the delight of God.* It is impossible but God should have the tenderest respect to his own likeness; he must needs take a pleasure in resemblance to his own nature, in a habit of his Spirit's infusing. Can God despise the work of his own? Can he then despise the work of his heart, a likeness to himself, to his Son, to his Spirit? His delight is strengthened by a threefold cord: *He delights not in the strength of a horse, nor takes pleasure in the legs of a man, but in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy, Psa. 147. 10, 11.* You are the first fruits of his creatures, peculiarly dedicated to him as his portion by the new birth; *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures, James 1. 18:* taken out of the mass of the world for a holy-offering to himself; the more refined part of his creation: not barely creatures, but first fruits, peculiarly belonging to him, upon whom he looks with a delightful eye, and under another relation. God cannot but love himself, and therefore that which approacheth most near to himself; for nothing in the creature is a fit object for God's love, but his own living image in him: as he loves himself in himself, so he loves himself in his creature. To deny his truth, is to deny himself; to deny his love to his image, would be to deny his love to himself: he can as soon hate Christ glorified at his hand, as hate Christ formed in the soul.

If sin makes men the objects of his hatred, as being contrary to his nature; grace then makes them the objects of his love, as being agreeable to his nature; he cannot but delight in his own birth, and delight in the seals of his own Spirit. You could not but displease him by being in the flesh: *Those that are in the flesh cannot please God, Rom. 8. 8;* you then please him by being in the Spirit. Shall the pleasure

of the Father of spirits, in his own image, be of a lower degree than that of a natural father in his son, which bears the lineaments of his body? He hath no pleasure in any thing in the world, if not in you. Sin soon deformed all after he had pronounced them good, and stopped the joy God had in his works; it is by your redemption by his Son, and your regeneration by his Spirit, that the joy in his works is restored to him; if he should not delight in you, what hath he in the world to please himself with? Your services please him; a new spirit, a new beauty, is added to all your addresses: a new creature prays not as before, hears not as before, he refers all to God; there is a brokenness instead of pride, every sacrifice is washed in contrition, a zeal of spirit, a heavenly warmth, a sweet and delightful savour ascends up to him. It is you only that with grace *serve him acceptably*. *Heb. 12. 28.* with such a godly fear and frame wherein he takes a pleasure.

Well then; the new creature is the delight of God, though the scoff of men; the pleasure of him that commands the world, though reproached by them that fill hell.

3. How great a *foundation* then is laid in this for your happiness? New creatures, a divine nature, a relation to God, the delight of heaven. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away behold, all things are become new.* New for them, as well as new in them. Distance and dissimilitude from God, is the foundation of all misery; a likeness then to him, is the basis of all blessedness. Divine happiness is conatural to the divine nature, and due to it, as it were *jure intrinseco*; as new creatures you are heirs, as sanctified creatures you are made meet for the inheritance; you have an hereditary right, and an aptitudinary right. Can any comfort be greater, than to have right to an inheritance, and a fitness to enjoy it? *Now are we the sons of God, 1 John 3. 2;* we have this real relation; not only named so, but are so,

which is a certain foundation of a happiness which does not yet fully appear to us. But such a knowledge we have, that when the original of this new nature shall appear, our imperfect likeness shall arise to a full perfection ; *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* ; upon the account of this relation we know there will be an exact likeness between him and us. I suppose it is properly meant of a likeness to Christ, *we shall see him as he is* ; for the apostle, ver. 5, refers it to Christ, without altering the person he had spoke of before ; so that it is not meant of a seeing the essence of God, but the sight of Christ. Where lust reigns, the natural consequence is storms and dissatisfaction ; he that hath the image of the devil, hath a model of hell ; the new creature having the image of God, hath a model of heaven. A drop of grace is a drop of glory ; so much as there is of the new creation, so much of heaven is put into the soul. It is a *lively hope* of heaven here, and a full enjoyment of heaven hereafter, that the soul is begotten unto, *1 Pet.* 1. 3, 4. The greater the progress in this state, the more lively are the hopes of it, and the nearer approaches of heaven to the soul ; such a foundation of happiness, with the hopes and foresight of it, cannot but be attended with inconceivable pleasure.

4. How highly comfortable is it *to view yourselves*, and consider *the draught of this image, and the progress* of the new creation in your souls ? How comfortable is the work of self-examination to such a soul ! With what pleasure may you look upon your present state, and be filled with ravishments at every view ? When you look back upon your former condition, and think of your state of death, the noisomeness of your hearts to God, the stiffness of your souls against him, when you consider how spiritual death reigned over every part ; and now see your nature changed, your souls upon a lively and quick motion to God, your relishes of the sweetness of spiritual pleasures to be greater than those of sensual ; how comfortable is

it to behold those diffusions of God in your souls, and to feel them full of love to him, and full of love from him? How comfortable to view the original, and copy from it, and to see how near the one resembles the other? To cast your eye upon the state of wrath you were in by your first birth, and upon the state of grace you are in by the latter; to consider your former drudgery under sin, and your present freedom in the service of righteousness; it would make you perform those commands so often repeated, *of rejoicing in the Lord alway, and shouting for joy, since mercy doth so compass you about, Psal. 32. 11; Phil. 4. 4.* As upon the awakening of conscience, and the exercise of its reflexive office, there must needs arise an anguish and torment in an unrenewed soul; so upon the reflections of the same faculty in a new creature, there must spring a sparkling delight.

As God, by the reviews of himself, and contemplation of his own excellency, has an infinite joy: so the new creature by the views of itself, hath a joy in its measure proportionable to that of God himself. As it is in itself the image of God, so it is a lower fruition of him. I enjoy my friend somewhat in his picture, when the original is absent. And this joy is greater, when a beam from heaven shines upon this image, and both illustrates and discovers the beauty of it, which in the darkness of ignorance and mistakes cannot be seen. But take heed that in these reviews you impair not your comfort by any proud and God-neglecting reflections; but with humble and debasing thoughts of yourselves, and thankful admirations of the grace of God, and praises of him, for so excellent a draught in your hearts. It is wonderful to perceive how by such a carriage the comforts of heaven flow in upon the soul, when thus humbly and thankfully it opens itself before God in this review. And let this add to your comfort, that if the reviews of so imperfect an image in you, and the dark sight of God, whose image it is, be so delightful; how much more pleasant will it be,

when your souls shall be elevated to the highest perfection, and the most satisfying fruition?

5. And how great a comfort is it to consider, that this imperfect image, which is the foundation of happiness, *will in time be perfect*, and as fully resemble him whose image it is, as the creature is capable of? There is a day of perfect and glorious regeneration coming, wherein you will appear in all your royalty as heirs of God. The divine nature shall glitter without any sin to sully it; holiness shall hold the sceptre, without any lust to shake it. There is a day wherein Christ shall make all things new in the church, and in the soul; he sits upon his throne, and saith it, *Behold, I make all things new, Rev. 21. 5.* It will be so new and admirable, that when you look back upon that mean draught of it while you were in the world, you would think you never had a grain of the divine nature before in you.

As the vision of God will be perfect, so will your *likeness to him*, 1 John 3. 2; as it will be a vision without any clouds, so it will be a likeness without any dissimilitude, according to the creature's capacity. The vision of Christ here transforms us into a likeness to him in his death and resurrection; the vision hereafter transforms us into a likeness to him in glory. The close look of the soul upon God shall divest it of all carnal conceptions; the understanding shall perfectly behold the original; the will closely embrace it; the affections centre in it without distraction; the whole soul shall be changed from a less degree of glory to an inconceivable perfection in it; changed *from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. 3. 18, when the well of living water springing up in thee to eternal life, shall spring into it. This fire-baptism will not leave, till it hath fully consumed your dross, and refined your souls. That Spirit that begun the work, will fill the heart with the knowledge and love of God, as his promise is to fill the earth, Isa. 11. 9. He will not leave despoiling you of the oldness of the flesh, till there be not a mite left;

and clothing you with a newness of spirit, till there be not a grain of the soul free from this new enlivening. As he begun, so he will finish, in abolishing that which remains of vanity, and in filling this holy temple with the glory of the Lord.

There is certainly as much power in the second Adam to perfect, as well as to begin this new creation, as there was in the first, to convey his foul and defiled image to his posterity. The honour of Christ, and the good of the new creature, are concerned in it; the honour of Christ, in point of power and affection; the good of the new creature, in point of happiness; his honour would suffer, if he did not perfect what he had begun. As Moses pleads with God for perfecting the Israelites' deliverance in bringing them into Canaan, that the nations might not say, God was *not able to deliver them*, Numb. 14. 16. In point of affection, he loves his Father, therefore the image of his Father; he loves himself, therefore the picture of himself; he loves his Spirit which glorifies him, therefore will perfect the draught he hath made. It will then in time be perfect, not a lineament of God but will be illustriously drawn; there shall be no more complaints of a body of death, nor any snarlings of sin and lust.

Upon these considerations you may apply the comfort this new creation affords you:

1. Against *troubles in the world*. *Old things are passed away*, even the old events and issues of your afflictions, they are no longer used merely to trouble you or punish you, but to perfect this new creation; to engrave more deeply, or exercise this divine image. All things are but fellow-labourers to throw out the rubbish, and blow up this divine spark. *They all work together for good, to them who are called according to his purpose*, Rom. 8. 28. As regenerating grace gives us a relation to God, so it should expel fear. *Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name, thou art mine*, Isa. 43. 1. What reason is there

to fear when he hath called you by name, in a special manner, not in a general way? What reason to fear when thou hast the badge of God upon thee, who hath new created thee? The grace wherein you stand, or the state of grace, should make you not only to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, but to *glory in tribulations also*, as well as the apostle, because *it works patience, &c. Rom. 5. 2, 3*, It dresses up the new creature, and draws the several parts of the gracious habit into exercise. Though it seem strange, yet the glorying in tribulation is as proper an effect of this new creation, as *rejoicing in hope of the glory of God*. Grace being the foundation of your glory in heaven, cannot but be the foundation of glorying in every thing else which heightens it, and pushes it nearer to its centre. Let not affliction, crosses, reproaches, molest your new nature; be new creatures as to your respects to them, as well as relation to God. Our Saviour's sonship, and the meat the world knew not of, supported him under greater injuries than we can ever be subject to. What clouds of trouble should ever sadden that heart, which hath the living image of God in his soul? This alone should turn the wormwood of affliction into honey, and bitterness into sweetness.

2. You may apply the comfort of your new creation against *temptations*. Will not the power of God be employed in the defence of that, which is his only image in the world, since he knows that Satan is most active against it, because it is his image? And upon the same account, will not God be active for it? Surely that Spirit which begat it, broods upon its own birth, and watches for the defence of it against its mighty adversaries. Satan watches to cast impurity upon the divine nature; the Spirit watches to hinder it, and if cast on, to wipe it off, and restore it to its beauty. Can it enter into the heart of an infinite affection, nakedly to expose his own work, his affectionate new creature, made up of faith in him, and

love to him, that which maintains his honour in the world, designs all for his glory, values his honour above his own credit, yea, his life; opposes every thing that opposes him; hates every thing that is loathsome to him, would endure any misery rather than displease him. I say, shall a God of infinite tenderness expose this creature to the violences and furies of hell without any defence? What should we make of God, by entertaining such thoughts of him, but a hard master, a cruel tyrant, one that would make his own work the sport of devils, to stand by carelessly and see his image trampled upon, and leave the best subjects he hath in the world to the mercy of his mortal enemy? Let not such a thought enter into any new creature; nor let us believe, that the love in the heart of the new Creator is less than the power in his hand. It was the sonship and resurrection of our Saviour secured him against the counsels of enemies; *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, *Psal.* 2. 2, and 7 compared: So our communion with him in his resurrection secures us against the malicious designs of Satan. *Thou art my Son, this day have I regenerated thee*, is the voice of God to a new creature; and by this relation his happiness is secured under the greatest assaults, if he keep up faith, which will fetch vigour from the head. The devil by his whole legions of temptations, cannot more prevail against the seed of God, than Haman could against Mordecai, because he was *of the seed of the Jews*, as his wife prudently advised him; *Esth.* 6. 13.

3. This comfort of the new creation, is applicable against *fears of falling away*. Were grace like a moral habit, acquired by moral acts, it might sink under a force, it might be lost: but it is a divine work, a new creation in Christ, not any thing gained by moral philosophy, and a road of virtuous actions. Men may seem to begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. But does the Spirit begin this regeneration work, to suffer it to end in the flesh? When the

apostle speaks of men's works, he fears the consequence ; but when he speaks of God's working in a man, he is confident of a good issue, *Phil.* 6. 6. God never begins, but he resolves to perform and finish. As it is impossible for one united to Adam in a natural way, not to partake of his sinful life ; so it is impossible for one united to Christ in a gracious way, not to partake of his spiritual life. And as every man is really in the loins of Adam ; so every believer is, in a sort, spiritually in the loins of Christ, and is as truly denominated his seed ; and as no man can be cut off from the stock of Adam, but by the grace of God ; so no man can be taken off from the stock of Christ, when once implanted, but by the retraction of that grace, against which there is sufficient security in the covenant of grace, and several promises in scripture, like stars in the heavens, set to give light to this truth.

The new creature under the gospel shall grow in beauty as the *lily* ; in strength like a *cedar* ; his beauty shall be as fresh as that of the *rose* or *lily* ; his *root* as firm as that of a *cedar* ; and this from God, who will be as the *dew* unto it ; *I will be as the dew to Israel : he shall grow up as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon, Hos.* 14. 5. As dew quickens the plant, so will God enliven Israel ; what withering can there be under such an influence ? If you have been made new creatures in Christ, you are made stable creatures, his charge is as great to preserve you, as it was to renew you. Besides, the divine nature is so delightful a thing, that he that once is a possessor, hath no mind to be a loser of it. He that hath once put off the old man, and put on the new, will have little heart to make another exchange, and divest himself of his beautiful robe, to be clothed again with the old tattered garments which he hath flung upon the dunghill. The new creation is a fellowship with Christ *in his resurrection, Phil.* 3. 10 ; and therefore in the consequents of it ; as Christ did not rise to die again, so the soul

is not made new to become old again ; Christ formed in the soul is like Christ incarnate in the world ; the divine nature may be obscured, it may and will have its humiliation ; it cannot indeed die ; but though it seem to die, it will have its resurrection, and afterwards its ascension into glory.

4. It is comfort against *weakness of grace*, and *strength of corruptions*. The whole frame of the new creature is wrought at once : the soul is infused at once ; but not as Adam was, created in his full stature, and perfect strength, and exercise of all his faculties : but as Adam's posterity were generated, first infants, then men ; others may be more honourable creatures, but the weakest grace is a new creature ; others may be more noble members, but every new creature is a member of the body : others may have more grace, but not a better title ; the weakest is a heaven-born heir, and hath the same title by the purchase of the Redeemer, the reality of the new creation, and the Spirit of adoption. I do not mean by the weakest grace, a superficial desire, or a velleity not to sin, and yet a daily running into it ; but a grace mating and mastering corruption, though residing with it ; a grace that is daily eating into the bowels of lust, and growing up to a sharper animosity and strength against what is contrary to it. For the least degree of grace is prevalent against sin, and is not over-powered by it, though it be mightily opposed. The essence of grace is the same in every new creature, though the degrees be different ; it is one thing to have the nature of fire, another thing to have the strength of it ; a spark is essentially fire, and will burn, though not so much as a flame. If the frame be new, though the draughts be not so clear, nor the lineaments drawn with such lively colours, yet there is a representation ; the first draught of a picture bears a likeness to the person, but it will be more lively after the second or third sitting, when the limner has laid on his fresher colours.

If your complaints of weakness of grace and strength

of corruption, be sincere, it is a comfortable sign *you will hold out*. Hasty pretenders and proud boasters are not durable; the seed sown in stony ground *presently sprung up*, *Matt.* 13. 5, grew faster, as if it would outstrip the common harvest; but as soon withered; whereas that which was sown in the good ground, sprung up leisurely to perfection, and endured the storm.

You cannot reasonably think, you should *presently be rid of your corruptions*. Some spice of a cured disease will remain in the soul as well as the body; and a certain spiritual weakness after the raising of the new creature. The law in the mind doth not presently raze out the law of sin in the members. There is a diabolical nature as well as divine.* The Platonist could say, “The virtuous man who doth something, ἀπροαίρετον, is both a God and a dæmon.” Christ formed in the heart, does not presently dispossess the serpentine nature, but master it. A man restored to health from a sharp disease, may do the actions of a sound man, yet not in that manner and soundness, for all his motions are infected with the relics of that disease which lately mastered his body. † Original corruption is not as a cistern, then it may be emptied; but a spring; pump out all you can at one duty, it will rise again, you will see it before the next service; it is true, that *he that is born of God, commits not sin*: he sins not with such a frame as he did before; but it is as true, that *if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth of grace in us*, 1 *John* 1. 8. There will be a running issue, that you may frequently touch the hem of Christ’s garment for a cure. The soul of the best is never like to be without spot or wrinkle, till it be glorious, *Eph.* 5. 26.

And remember, all God’s communications of grace are *gradual*. Doth the mustard-seed spring up in an

* Plotin Enead. 1. lib. 2. cap. 6. † Rogers on Pet. p. 1.

instant to the tallness of a tree? Grace is sown in an instant, but grows not up so suddenly. Christ formed in the heart, is like Christ in the flesh; first in his cradle, before he can walk. The new creation is not a sudden leap from corruption to perfect purity. The day dawns in the heart, but the light takes a time to expel the darkness. *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, Prov. 4. 18.* The first appearance at the dawning is an earnest, that the victory will be complete at last. God did not make a full discovery of Christ to Adam, his revelations of him grew brighter with every age; the nearer his coming, the clearer was the foresight of him. The divine nature hath its time of discovery in the creature, as it had in Christ the original: there were *forty days* between his resurrection and ascension, wherein he was but in the first degree of his exaltation. Christ risen in the heart, will take some time before he ascends and carries up the soul to spiritual heights with him.

Finally. Consider well how it is with thy *will*. It is not the having of lusts, but the fulfilling of them, wherein our danger lies. *We have then put on the Lord Jesus Christ, when we make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof, Rom. 13. 14,* but endeavour to walk holily. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, could pretend to little more than will, *Heb. 13. 18, willing to live honestly, καθῶς, comely, beautifully;* and herein Paul exercised himself, *Acts 24. 16.* He manifested this will by compliance with all seasonable occasions to that purpose. Is there grace in the whole soul? Is there an enlightened judgment to see the foulness of sin, and the loveliness of Christ? Is there a renewed will to incline to God, and to close with the Redeemer? Is there a rectified affection, consisting of love, desire, delight, though yet but weak in all the faculties? Are there dissatisfactions in you upon internal reviews? Have you not strong bewailings and laments for the strength

of sin, and weakness of grace, and breathings after a more vigorous and active grace? Let not then your complaints of the body of death stifle your praises of God for what he hath wrought in Christ, in order to your full deliverance; they did not so in Paul, *Rom. 7. 24, 25*; let them not do so in you; take comfort in what God hath wrought, bless him for it, and solicit him to confirm that which he hath wrought in you, *Psal. 68. 24*. He that provides food for the ravens that cry, will not stop his ears at the voice of his own image.

5. It is comfort against *the fear of death*. If you were born only of the old Adam, you were spiritually dead, and you must eternally die; it were unavoidable, if not changed. But if born of an incorruptible seed, the dissolution of your body shall be the consummation of your glory. Death strikes the outward man, and the new creature elevates the soul. The new nature will as naturally ascend to heaven, when it is unclothed of flesh, and has left all the relics of corruption behind it, as the pure flame aspires into the air, and seems to long to embody itself with the sun, the first fountain of light: how joyfully will the original and copy meet? *To depart* from hence, is to *be with Christ*, *Phil. 1. 23*. The truth of grace in the creature, and the infinite righteousness in the Creator, kiss each other. How affectionately will God entertain that image of himself? How delightfully will Christ view himself in the soul, and the soul view itself in the heart of Christ? The soul shall see Christ in glory, and Christ shall behold the soul in perfection, where there will be nothing but life and love, love and life, for ever. Is death then to be feared, that brings the new creature to this happiness?

PART VII.

SELF EXAMINATION.

The knowledge of personal regeneration possible and not difficult—Enquiry into the effects and operations of it—The great difference it makes as to our former state—Subjects of self examination—Desire of likeness to God—His inward authority over the heart—Affections to God—The state of the soul in spiritual duties—Value for the institutions of Christ—The state of holiness in the heart—Dispositions against things contrary to the divine nature—Delight in the ways of God.

OF all things, the doctrine of regeneration deserves the strictest enquiry, in regard of its absolute necessity, and in regard of its superlative excellency.

1. It is *possible* to know it, and *not very difficult* to know it. You may know the acts of your own heart: Can you not view your own thoughts? Can you desire, or love, or hate, or grieve, but you must know that you do so? Can you not tell what is the object of your inclinations? What your affections run most greedily after? No man can be such a stranger to his own soul, if he look into it. Can you not tell whether you are the same men as before; whether you love what before you hated, and hate that which before you loved? A soul may know whether it loves God supremely or no, so as to appeal to God for the truth of it, as Peter to our Saviour, *Lord, thou knowest that*

I love thee, John 21. 17. It is in this reflexive power, that a man excels a brute.

You must enquire into the *effects and operations* of it. Where there is this spiritual change, there is life: where there is a spiritual life, there will be spiritual operations. You must enquire then, what sense and motion you have, that is superior to a life of nature. This new creation is not only the taking down the old frame, but setting up a new. The old creature frame will grow more inactive, the new-creature form more sprightly. Regeneration is never without some effect; if we have not the properties, we have not the nature. If the air be dark and pitchy, that a man cannot see his way, it is a sign the sun is not up, to enlighten that hemisphere. A thick darkness cannot remain with the sun's rising. The works of darkness, with their power, cannot remain with a new creature state. The old rubbish cannot wholly remain with a new building. Look well therefore, whether old principles, aims, customs, company, affections, are passed away, and whether new affections, principles, ends, be settled in the room. Be sure to distinguish well between the form and the power, between a paint and life, and regard well your inward acts. The acts of the new creature are principally in the proper seats of it, the mind, the heart, the will, the conscience, the affections. Outward acts are no sign at all; no man can perfectly judge of another by them; nor any man judge of himself. As the strength of sin, so the strength of grace, the new creature, lies in the heart. Those waters which are bitter, are bitterest, and those which are sweet, are sweetest, at the fountain; they lose somewhat of their qualities in the streams, by the mixture of other things with them.

3. In general observe, what *contrariety* there is to what you were before, and the very point wherein this contrariety consists. It is a spiritual habit, a divine nature, the law of God in the heart. It must principally be discerned in its motion to God, in its respect

to God, whose law, nature, habit it is, directly contrary to the sinful habit, the law of sin in the heart, the old serpentine nature which moved to sin. Let us see in general, how it was with Paul, who speaks so much of the new creature: he was quite another man after his being in Christ than he was before: he was before an admirer of his own righteousness, a contemner of grace, a persecutor of Christ and his members. After the new creation, his pharisaical plumes fall, his own righteousness is as dross, he lays it down at the feet of Christ; grace is highly admired by him, and his whole labour is spent in glorifying Christ, and edifying his church: he abhors that which before he delighted in: he did before his own will, and the will of his sect; now, *Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* He is now an admirer, where he was a despiser: his industry, passions, heart, are for Christ, as before they were against him: the doctrine of the cross is no longer folly, but wisdom: he glories as much in being persecuted for Christ, as in being a persecutor of him and his people: his ravaging wolvisish nature is gone, and a lamblike nature in the place of it: he hath as much sweetness toward the people of Christ, as he had sourness against them: of an executioner, he becomes a martyr; and would not only lose his life, but be an *anathema* to do them good, whom before he hated. Christ was his life, Christ was his joy, Christ was his all, and nothing but Christ dear to him. A quite contrary strain. And this is a new creature: and therefore examine yourselves. Is there faith instead of unbelief; the knowledge of God, instead of ignorance; a constant glowing affection to him, instead of enmity, or a coldness of love; the love of the Creator instead of that of the creature? This is to have the image of God instead of that of the devil.

But in particular I ask,

1. What fervent longings have you after a *likeness to God*? The first draught of this image begets strong desires for a farther perfection. The sighs and groans

for a likeness to God, are the first lineaments of God in the soul; and arise from some degree of affection to him, and delight in him. The breathings of the soul are *for the living God*, as David, *Psa.* 42. 2, and 84. 2, for God, as a principle of life and spirit in him. This hungering and thirsting after righteousness, is a sign of righteousness already in the soul, and an earnest of a further fulness, *Matt.* 5. None can fervently and unweariedly long for a divine nature, but such as have had some taste of it. The divine nature in the soul will be returning to that nature, whence it derives its essential purity. The principle coming from God, will be aspiring to that nature which it is a part of, as rivers to the sea, and swell if they be hindered: he must needs long after a full draught, and can no more satisfy himself with imperfect lineaments, than a sick man can with an imperfect cure. It is to this end he breathes after heaven, because it is a state of perfection; not from any carnal notion of it. He knows he is not already perfect, and therefore presses forward with eager desire and endeavour, if by *any means he may attain the resurrection from the dead*, *Phil.* 3. 11, 12, 13, &c. He does not only desire a freedom from sin, but to be as pure and elevated in affection to God, as an angel.

God is not only free from unrighteousness, but full of righteousness; and therefore those desires of a divine nature, are not limited to, and centred in, a negative holiness. He would set himself no other pattern but God. It is an excellent speech of an heathen*, exhorting not only to live the life of a good man, which civil virtue, and the vogue of men approved of, but to look above that, to the choicest desire of a divine life: "For," saith he, "our endeavours should be for a likeness to God, not to good men." To endeavour to be like to man, is to make

* Plotin, *Ennead.* 1 lib. 2. cap. 7. Πρὸς γὰρ τεττες : ἰ. ε. Θεος ἢ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἀγαθὸς ἢ ὁμοίους.

one image like another ; but a new creature aims at the highest exemplar ; it aspires after no lower a pattern than God himself, his will, his rule, his glory, his pleasure. Do the breathings of your spirits rise as much for it, as the steams of your lusts did before against it ?

2. Put this question to yourselves ; What *inward* authority hath God over your hearts ? Is the government of God set up in your souls ? Can you with joy say, The Lord reigns, and none but he shall reign over me. The new creature coming under another government, has frames suitable to it, and delightfully owns that supreme authority, and pleases himself more in a subjection to God, than the wicked can in their slavery to sin. Do you *yield yourselves to God, and your members, as instruments of righteousness unto God* ? Are the motions of your souls guided by him ? You are then *alive from the dead* ; it is the apostle's assertion, *Rom. 6. 4.* Sin doth reside, but which reigns, God or lust ? An usurpation may be on sin's part, when no voluntary subjection on ours. Is it an absolute, or only a partial resignation of yourselves to him ? Do you give him a moiety, or do you give him the whole ? Has he the sole sovereignty, or would you give him an associate ? Are any evil ways hated, out of a respect to his word, to his authority, wisdom, goodness, or a respect to yourselves ? *I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way, Psal. 119. 128.* Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me, ver. 133. Are God's dictates readily obeyed ? Does a free submission to his authority, govern and act thee in his ways ? Do you count his yoke easy, and his burden light ? Do you glory in the chain of grace, and count the service of sin as iron fetters ? Is the will of God above your own wills : do you defy the one to observe the other ? Is God's will sacred with you, when it thwarts your own, or only when it suits your interest ? It is not then

the authority of God which prevails with you, but the authority of some extraneous thing, which has the chief moving force. If so, there is no sign of the new creature in such a frame.

3. How are your *affections to God*? It is a new creature we are speaking of, and that is inward chiefly. Sin may be left in the practice, and not hated: goodness may be practised, when it is not affected. Where then is the new creature? It is not only a change of professions. Simon Magus had changed that before his baptism, but not his heart, either before or after, *Acts* 8. 21. The strength of sin lies in the understanding, will, and affections. And it is there that the strength of grace must appear, and set up its banners. Are your *affections and lusts* of your flesh *crucified*? They must be so, if you are Christ's new creatures, *Gal.* 5. 24. The strong stirring of natural conscience, may weaken a present resolution to an act of sin, but not an affection to it, and to the habit of sin. It may restrain from outward exercises, not from inward dispositions. Natural conscience informs of the evil, but does not confer upon us a disaffection to that evil.

What are the inclinations of your affections; are they fixed upon God? What are they for duration? are they constantly in motion to him? Is it your pleasure to think of him, to live to him? Are the remainders of unlikeness to him, your grief, your yet imperfect image your delight, not because it is imperfect, but because it is his image? Every sigh, or a slight affection, is not a new creature. It is a deep engravement, a constant inclination, contrary to what it was before, as white to black. Do your affections correspond with the affections of God? Do you hate every thing that he hates? Or is there any one lust thou wouldst caress, and hide among the stuff? Such a frame is not the new creature frame: God loves not one sin, neither must we, if we be like him. Is the love to God and Christ, more settled, than love to

father or mother, which is an inbred affection, born with our natures, *Matth.* 10. 37. It must be so supreme. What desires have you to magnify his name? Do you love him so intensely, as to part with your lives to glorify and enjoy him? If you be new creatures, God and his glory will be dearer to you, than friends, credit, life.

He said not amiss, That “no man is a true christian, who is not an habitual martyr;” that is, that hath not a disposition to lay down his life for the honour of God. And that apostle who hath spoke so much of the new creature, had such a raised affection, he would *not count his life dear*, so he might *finish his course with joy*, which was *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* *Acts* 20. 24. He could lay down his head more willingly upon a block, than upon a pillow, if he might finish his course to his master’s honour, and publish his grace. Where there is no concern for the honour of God, there is little sign of a likeness to him, for this is an essential part of true christianity. If we have a new nature, we cannot but love that nature, wherever we find it. And where we find it in a greater degree, and infinitely perfect, as in God, we cannot but love it there above all. Else we offer violence to the divine nature; and in not loving it in God, we love it not in ourselves. It is impossible there can be this divine nature, without spiritual affections; and that the image of God can be in us, without having an intense love to him whose image it is. If any thing then lie nearer the heart of any man than God, the image of God is not in him; therefore look into your hearts, how does your hatred break out against sin? How is your sorrow poured out for sin?

4. How stand your souls to *inward and spiritual duties*? How vile are you in your own eyes because of sin? What grief is there even for your least imperfections? Are you every day defacing your pride, and strengthening your humility? Pride is the great

forte of the old man; humility the great security of the new. How are you in prayer? Are you constant, are you fervent, have you daily converses with God? I mean secret prayer and meditation; they are the most intimate converses with God. I appeal to you that neglect those duties; can you pretend to this new creation? Do you think that the image of God in the heart, would not often move to its original? Can a likeness to God consist with an estrangedness from him? Can any man live the life of God, that does not care for the presence of God, either speaking to him, or thinking of him? Can that law in the heart, which is put in that we may not depart from him, consist with this which is the prime departure, never to seek him, or to seek him coldly? All the affections of the new creature bend to him, and centre in him: can this be without a drawing near to him? The spirit of grace is followed with a *spirit of supplication, the spirit of grace and of supplication, Zech. 12. 10.* The spirit is not a dumb spirit in the new creature. The first work in the heart, is to cry, *Abba, Father; God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father, Gal. 4. 6.*

The first impression made by the Spirit is upon the eye of the soul to look to God, and the voice of the soul to cry to him. It is the first work of a regenerate man, as regenerate. It is the argument our Saviour uses to Ananias, to have confidence that Paul was not the same man as before; *Behold he prays, Acts 9. 11.* Our old nature being made up of aversion from God, the proper language of that is, *depart from us.* The new nature being made up of an inclination to God, the proper language of that is, *it is good for me to draw near to God;* for upon this renewing grace, God is the proper centre of the soul; and the same principle which moves other things to the centre, will move the soul to God. It is made the effect of a pure heart; *Peace with them that call*

on the Lord out of a pure heart ; 2 Tim. 2. 22 : and the characteristical note of a saint ; *Saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, 1 Cor. 1. 2.*

5. What *value and relishes* have you of the word, and institutions of Christ? As the life is, so is the food ; a spiritual appetite for spiritual food, is a comfortable sign of a renewed nature. In every nature, there is an aversion to what is destructive, an inclination to what is preservative : every creature does as much desire its proper food, as it abhors that poison that would blast it. The new nature hath a new taste, his palate is imbittered to his former pleasure, and refined and prepared for his new delight ; he relishes what before he loathed ; esteems that sweetest that before was unpleasantest. The law in the heart, being an impression of the word, will answer it with a choice affection : the first cleansing of the heart, and the progressive sanctification of it, is wrought by the word ; *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, Eph. 5. 26.* The image of God in the heart cannot but value the image of God in his law : since the soul is brought to a love of God, it will love his operations, and all the methods of them, and therefore his word.

A rectified judgment will have a rectified affection : there will be a spiritual palate, whereby it proves and approves what is the *good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, Rom. 12. 2.* What is pleasing to God, is good and pleasing to him. And the same apostle sets it as a sign of a perfect man, or a sincere new creature, to esteem that the wisdom of God, which the world counts foolishness ; *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, 1 Cor. 2. 6.* The spirit of truth in the new creature, will fill it with a strong affection to those truths in the word. Truth in the heart, and truth in the word, being so near of kin, cannot be strangers or unwelcome to one another. What sympathy then is there, between the word and your hearts? What

exercise of grace in it? What improvement of grace by it? Do you desire it to satisfy your curiosity, or to further your growth? *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,* 1 *Pet.* 2. 2. Are you like the plants, both cleansed and quickened by the showers, and discovering themselves in a fresh verdure? How do you dilate your souls for it? How do you work it upon your hearts? Do you desire it should be stamped upon you? Do you long for a more perfect intimacy with it? Do you prize it above the satisfactions of wealth and the pleasures of sense? Is it *more excellent than gold,* *Psal.* 19. 10, and *sweeter than honey,* *Psal.* 119. 103? Do you spiritually concoct it, and turn spiritual meat into a spiritual juice, as the stomach does meat into chyle, and other parts of the body, into blood? Life can only do this. Do you love to have it dwell richly in you, and bring down the highest imaginations to the foot of it? Do you sacrifice your dearest Isaacs, when the word commands you? Is it a pleasure to you to see the face of God in his ordinances? Is your pleasure raised most by the spirituality of truth? The more spiritual any truth is, the more satisfactory it is to a spiritual taste. Do your hearts burn within you at the warm breath of Christ? Are they not only warmed, but raised into a flame, and that lasting? Not like the straw which doth blaze and vanish.

6. What holiness is there in your *hearts and lives*? God cannot be otherwise than holy, therefore holiness is the perpetual concomitant of the divine nature; and so the apostle makes it to consist *in escaping the pollutions that are in the world through lust,* 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. There is a principle which springs up in holy motions and thoughts. It is in the soul the image of God is stamped, and it is there that the new creature does chiefly exercise and preserve it. Holiness must be the proper effect of that which is planted by the spirit of holiness. He that pretends to a likeness to God without it, fathers irregularity upon him, and

makes him the author of that which is most monstrous. It is not born of *the will of the flesh*, to follow sensual pleasures, nor of the will of man to follow only rational delights; but of the *will of God*, and therefore follows that *will* it was born of, *John* 1. 13. Let *thy kingdom come, thy will be done*, is the natural language of the new creature, and glad he is to have the spirit point him to those ways that are most conformable to the divine will: for it is not a strained holiness, but natural, such a one as ariseth from the *fear of God in the heart*, *Jer.* 32. 40, and a care to please God in his walk; *yea what care?* *2 Cor.* 7. 11. It is holy, as God is holy, in some measure, and therefore like him whose infinite purity cannot endure pollution. And it can no more divest itself of its inclinations to righteousness, than the soul can strip itself of its natural activity.

There is a certain connection between a *heart of flesh*, and *walking in God's statutes*, *Ezek.* 16. 27. To what purpose doth God give it? Either for his own work, or for the devil's? There is no need of it for the latter; the heart of stone would have done his work effectually; therefore for the service of the former, and that constantly; for the new creature is *created to good works*, not to do them by fits and starts, but *to walk in them*, *Eph.* 2. 10; and he is described by the apostle, to be one that *walks after the spirit*, *Rom.* 8. 1; the ordinary course of his heart is spiritual. How is it with you then; is holiness your proper element? Is it a death to you when any thing contrary to it buds up in your hearts? Is there a purity of heart joined with a zeal for goodness? *Tit.* 2. 14. They go hand in hand, as being both the ends of our Saviour's death, and both the works of the Spirit. Is there an angry detestation of the loathsomeness of sin, and a kindly affection to the purity of grace? It will be thus if the new creation be wrought; for as in original sin there was the root of all evil, therefore all holiness may be opposed,

and all sin practised; so in the habit of grace, there is the root of all grace, therefore all sin will be loathed, and every part of holiness will be loved.

But on the contrary, if your old lusts be rather improved than impaired; if you are more charmed by swinish pleasures, and enamoured of them: if the enmity in your hearts, or the loathsomeness in your lives remain, is there any thing of a new creature in you? Judge yourselves. Do you make as rich a provision for the flesh as before? Is your heart and life set upon it with as much affection? Are you joyful when employed in its drudgery? Is this to be a new creature? Can there be such darkness, if the sun of grace were risen upon you? Such fruits evidence the standing of the old root. He that hath the black mark of the devil in his life, hath no reason to think he hath the spiritual badge of Christ in his heart, and if he do, he doth deceive himself.

7. How is your *disposition* against those things which are *contrary to a divine nature*? No creature hath a greater antipathy to that which is contrary to its nature, than a regenerate man hath against that which is contrary to the divine; it is as impossible there can be a friendly neighbourhood between the new man and the old, as between the ark and Dagon, between heat and cold, which are always quarrelling, yea, between *Christ and Belial*, 2 Cor. 5. 16.

How is your disposition in the first place against the *motions of sin*. An irreconcilable war is commenced between grace and corruption; at the first inlet flesh is in arms to hinder, the spirit in arms to maintain its standing, Gal. 5. 17; the contest is in the whole man; grace is seated in the heart, sends out its commands, and dispatches forces to every part, to meet with its enemy,* as motion beginning in the centre diffuseth itself through the whole sphere, shaking every part to the circumference; light will oppose

* Jackson. vol. 3. 4to. p. 495.

darkness in every part of the air, they cannot shake hands together ; the increase of the one is the decrease of the other. Sensibility is a sign of life, a dead man complains not of wounds and cutting ; but a living man will complain of the least prick of a pin. Natural men cannot complain of that which they do not feel ; there is a mighty friendship between a dead carcase and rottenness ; nothing is noisome to it. Loads of sin may lie upon him, like mountains upon a dead body, and no complaint ; *the motions of sin work in his members without resistance, and bring forth their fruit unto death, Rom. 7. 5.*

But the new creature counts the least sin that hath stolen in upon him, his torture, like the stone in the bladder, a worm in the root, and can find no rest, till he routs the beginnings of the disease. If there be no antipathy then to that which is contrary to the life and being of a christian, it is a sure sign that there is nothing of a divine life ; for as a renewed man esteems all the precepts of God, *to be right, and hates every false way, Psal. 119. 128* ; so he must abhor every motion which would divert him from what he values, and entice him to what he hates. How are your understandings sensible of the first risings contrary to the interest of the new creature ? Are they more ready to dissent from them ; your wills more ready to check them than before ? What counterworkings against the flesh with its affections and lusts ? Are you ready with weapons in your hand to stay the first stirrings of corruption ? Are you ready to pluck those buds, and fling them away with disdain ? Does both your courage and strength increase : Can you more readily be in arms against the rising of a lust, than formerly you were ; and cannot without horror bear the approaches of them ? Does a little dust of sin got into your eye, set you a weeping before God ?

Again, how stand you affected to *spiritual sins* ? Here you should lay the great stress in your examination of the new creation ; for your lives may be the

lives of saints, while your hearts are the hearts of Devils ; we may have no spots of the flesh upon our garments, and a world of them upon our souls ; spiritual sins may revel, where the most fleshly and sensual iniquities are excluded. There is a war in the heart of the new creature, against spiritual wickedness, *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, Eph. 6. 12* ; or, wickedness spiritualized in the high places*, the choicest faculties of the soul : Satan does most excite those sins in the heart, and natural conscience makes no resistance against them. It is only an enlightened conscience that understands and abhors this darkness, and loathes those steams which others cherish. Do you wrestle against these which partake most of the devil's nature ? Do you dandle them in your minds, or do you groan at the appearance of them ? Do you fly from them, as you would do from a visible apparition of the devil ? These are most contrary to the divine nature and life of God. And a renewed man can no more avoid contesting with them, than the nature of a living creature can with poison. But if you can without any reluctance play the wantons with these in your hearts ; if you think pride, vain-glory, ambition, speculative wickedness, &c. no evils ; if your hearts never start at the appearance of them ; if you entertain them as welcome guests, though you be never so free from the filthiness of the flesh, you have yet the strength of Satan's image in you, nothing of a christian formed. A natural man may quarrel with some sins, not with all ; renewed men with all, because all are enemies to God, and to the life of grace in the heart ; he is always with arms in his hand to extirpate sin, and drive the Canaanite from his forts, as well as the open field.

And let me ask you once more, are you in the like

* *Προς τὰ πνευματικά τς ποιησάμεν ἐν τοῖσι πνεύματις.*

manner affected against *temptations and occasions of sin*? The state of regeneration makes the soul more subject to the assaults of temptations than before, from the envy of Satan, who stomachs the happiness of the new creature. Do your souls start at the appearance of a temptation? Do you regard any enticement to a departure from God, as your torment? Do you discountenance it at the first approach, and give it no civiler entertainment, than *get you behind me Satan*? Christ in the flesh did so, and Christ formed in the heart will do no less; if he happen to come near the way of evil men, he will observe the wise man's counsel; *He will avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away, Prov. 4. 14, 15.* His spirit will rise against any thing that would intrude upon him, which looks unfriendly towards God. The nobleness of the new nature will make him disdain a sordid temptation, and inspire him with a holy generosity; and the stronger the nature, the more vigorously will it oppose that which would deform it. And if any temptation break in upon it at any time, and master it, how restless is it to be delivered from it? Applies itself with all its force to heaven, complains against it, engages God's power on its side, makes up the gap where sin has broken in, and fortifies the place to prevent a future assault. In short, a natural man nourishes inward lusts, meets motions to sin half way, smiles upon an approaching temptation: a new creature starts at the first appearance for the most part, frowns upon satanical suggestions, turns away his eyes from beholding vanity. One makes provision to maintain them, the other to destroy them; one submits to the tempter, the other arms himself against him.

8. Put this question to yourselves, *what delight do you find in God and his ways*? This indeed is an evident sign of the new nature; by this men may judge of themselves, if they will not deceive and flatter themselves in their search. This is the greatest evidence of sincerity in all the ways of God. For the law can-

not be in any man's heart, unless he delight to do the will of God; *Thy law is within my heart, I delight to do thy will, O my God, Psal. 40. 8.* He will be carried out with a spiritual joy and triumph to the acting what is spiritually good, with a mighty pleasure, as great as the body takes in eating when it is hungry, or drinking when it is thirsty. It was thus with our Saviour in the flesh, it is thus with Christ formed in the heart, it is his meat and drink to do the will of God; not so much in the new creature as it was in Christ, because in that there is a remaining principle of resistance, in Christ none. It is then, he can *delight himself in the Lord, Isa. 58. 14,* and count him *his exceeding joy, Psal. 43. 4.* As it is an argument that Seneca gives of the divine original of the soul, that it is most pleased with divine speculations: it is no less an argument of the new creation, when it is delighted not only with the speculative, but with the practical contemplation of God, when the soul that triumphed before in the pleasures of sin, can burn with an ardent love to God, and solace itself in communion with him: and unless holy services be our delightful element, we have not a likeness to that God, who is not only righteous, but *delights in righteousness, loving-kindness, and judgment, Jer. 9. 24.*

Every being owes so much respect to its own welfare, as not to act sluggishly and drowsily in its main concern; for the same love which excites it to perform those things which are essential to its preservation, will oblige it to act with the highest complacency; and the more conducing they are to the well being of the creature, the more powerful is the joy which spreads itself through the whole essence of the creature; therefore holy services being as intrinsical to a holy principle, as the most inward operations of any creature can be to its nature, will be done with a vigorous frame, and an edged intenseness of spirit. Without this, in some degree, nothing requisite to the operations of a new creature can be performed; with-

out it, we have no aversion to that which is contrary to the law, nor an inclination to what is conformable to it. It is a *consent of the will* to the whole law, *Rom. 7. 16*; a delight of the affections in it; a consent to it in respect of the goodness; a *delight in it*, ver. 22, in respect of the authority enjoining it, as it is the law of God; not principally as it is in some parts conformable to human reason, but as it is the divine will, whereby both the sovereignty, holiness, and righteousness of God is owned by the whole inward man; the understanding, will, and affections, conspiring together with a strong delight in God and his law; hence you find David so often expressing his delight in it, *Psal. 119. 14, 35, 47, 70, 77, &c.* And indeed so much of weariness as we have in any service, so much of an old nature and a legal frame; so much as we have of love and delight, so much we have of a new creature, and new covenant grace.

A natural man cannot have any of this choice joy in any spiritual service, because it is against his nature; no more than a fish can delight to be upon the land out of its proper element; but a new creature has little delight in any thing, but as it regards God, and tends to him; other men's delights are terminated in the flesh; but the elevations of a renewed soul are highly spiritual. How then is it with you? Are the duties of religion, communion with God in them, your delightful element? Is a flight of your love to him, the acting for his glory, as pleasant as flattery to a proud nature, or gain to a covetous disposition? Have you little satisfaction in what you do, but still breathe and strive after a higher frame, and cannot rest, till with your choicest embraces of your souls, you clasp about God himself? O happy man! None but a divine nature could fill thee with such pleasing transports.

PART VIII.

EXHORTATIONS UPON THE SUBJECT OF REGENERATION.

The regenerate should admire and glorify God—Preserve the new nature in its vigour—Grow in spiritual stature—Should live and act as new creatures—Considering the excellency of birth—The great design of God in it—To walk otherwise than as new creatures dishonours God—Injurious to the soul—The unregenerate exhorted—By the evil of sin—The excellence, honour, and pleasure of a different state—The malignity of Satan—The voice of reason—The new creature only happy—Regeneration attainable—The means of attaining it.

First. **I** Address myself those who are *new creatures*, that have some comfortable evidence in their souls, that there is the image of God renewed in them.

1. How should you admire and *glorify* God? Is it possible that so noble a work can be unattended with a spirit of gratitude? How should you be filled with a sense of divine goodness, and formed to set forth his praise? Surely, this of thankfulness is not one of the least good works you are created unto. Before, when you were alienated from the life of God, you were estranged from his love and his praise; you

would never glorify him whom you did not affect, but since a heavenly nature is introduced, a heavenly work should become the very life of your souls; tongues and hearts should be set on fire by grace.

Has not God made you *differ* from the whole mass of the corrupted world? There is as great a difference between a new and an old creature, as between the clearest day and the darkest night; as between Christ who is glorified in heaven, the head of his own flock, and the devil who is damned in hell, the head of the unbelieving world; so they are opposed by the apostle, *2 Cor.* 6. 14, 15. Might you not have run down the stream with others; lived only a natural life with others, and at last died an eternal death, and descended with all your intellectual and moral endowments to the place only due to corrupt nature? But God, the God that is blessed for ever, hath breathed into you a breath of life, caused you to stand up before him with a resemblance of his nature, set you apart for himself, wrought you for glory; and made you live another life, a life by the faith of the Son of God. And is it not reason you should differ from all the world in your praises of him, who hath made you differ so vastly in your state and condition?

Hath not God in this bestowed upon you a *higher perfection* than all natural perfection in the world? The lowest degree of sense is more excellent than the highest inanimate perfection; therefore a fly, in regard of life, is more excellent than a diamond, or the sun itself. The lowest degree of reason is above the highest degree of sense; and the lowest degree of renewing grace, transcends the highest degree of reason; because this in the highest degree, is but human and natural; that in the lowest degree, spiritual and divine. Therefore you owe more to God, for your regeneration, than all creatures of the world do for their natural existence. He hath done more for you, in communicating to you his own nature, than if he had made you viceroys over men and angels, and put the whole

created world under your feet, without investing you with this new creation.

And this God hath done for you, when you were in the *common mass*, and had no more worth in yourselves to move him to it, than the rest of the world. No other motive on your part but misery. All the world had the same; for it lay in the like condition. All that you had, all that you were, was proper to move him to contempt of you, and a loathing you for ever. It was the invention of his own overflowing love, not any persuasion of your worth. What were you, and what was your father's house, that he should thus translate you from the drudgery of sin to the liberty of grace, from a spiritual death to a divine life? Had God called you out of the womb of nothing, unshaped as the great chaos, and asked you what degree of creatures you were willing to be raised unto, would you have presumed to desire God to make you like himself? Yet God in regeneration, raised you to a state you durst not ask, above a rational creature, even to a divine, when he had no motive to any thing, but to turn you with Nebuchadnezzar, to graze among the beasts, and partake with devils in the eternal misery of that image you had contracted.

It is therefore a wonderful and miraculous change. If the framing the body of man be so *wonderful* a work, *Psal.* 139. 14, and a curious piece of embroidery; how much more admirable is this new formation of the soul into the likeness of God. If we should see a silly fly, or a poisonous spider, a clod of earth, or a glow-worm, transformed into a glittering star, it would not be so great a miracle: it would be a change from one natural image to another; but this is a change from hell to heaven, from being a limb of the devil, to become a member of Christ, from a worse than Egyptian darkness, into a marvellous light. That is but a change of one innocent nature into another; this a change of a nature hateful to God, into

a nature delightful to him, a corrupt creature into an holy one, a change of something worse than a bare creature, into something like the great Creator and Redeemer. This is your change; therefore the highest obligation in the world, lies upon you to praise and glorify God. It is in the day of your regeneration, that God hath rolled away the reproach of your corruption and death, as he said of the Israelites when they were circumcised in Canaan, *Josh. 5. 9.*

To quicken you to praise this grace, *often reflect upon your former state.* Cast your eyes back upon what you were, that you may be thankful for what you are. Ah! what was I once? an hater of God, and hated by him; one bearing the image of Satan, and delighting in it; a noisome heap of lusts, estranged from God, sold under sin, dead to goodness, an enemy to the law: What a condition was I in then? Good Lord! how astonishing was thy mercy, how wonderful thy love, how great was thy power, to draw me out of this state!

Review what you are. What am I now? Here is a new light in my understanding, new inclinations in my will: I can now look upon God with pleasure, and run his ways with delight. Christ is my only joy, and Christ is my only gain: my old nature is wearing away, my new nature is rising higher and clearer; now am I freed by the blood of Christ, from my guilt, and by the Spirit of Christ, from my filth. What shall I render to the Lord for these inestimable benefits towards me? O blessed God! O dear Redeemer! O infinite condescending Spirit! to work these things for me; to clear such a nasty soul, imprint such an heavenly image, conform me to so excellent a pattern, and by grace to fit me for a glorious eternity! Let then the love of the author, the excellency of the work, the misery of your former state, the happiness of your new, be joined together in your considerations, to enhance your praise; and since you live the life of God, be sure to live the life of thankfulness.

2. As it is your duty to admire and glorify God, for making you new creatures ; so it is your duty, and advantage too, to *preserve in its vigour* this new nature in you. When Adam's life was infused, he was to preserve it by feeding upon the fruits of paradise, *Gen. 2. 29.* And you must preserve your spiritual lives, by the fruits of divine institutions placed in the church. The inner man is to be strengthened : Paul prays to this purpose for the Ephesians, *That he would grant you to be strengthened with might by his Spirit, in the inner man, Eph. 3. 16 :* which is not, as some understand it, a strengthening of reason, mind, and understanding. The scripture, by heart, understands the mind, will, and judgment ; but the apostle joins this inner man so with the heart, *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,* ver. 17, that he doth manifestly put a difference between this inner man and the heart, making one the seat, the other the root in it. The apostle wishes them not a strength of the soul, but a strength of the new man, and image of Christ in the soul. The devil is a mighty enemy to it : he hath lost a servant : he will leave no stone unturned to recover him : his servant will be his judge ; he will therefore endeavour to overthrow him. Go to God therefore for new supplies, in the case of Satan's assaults ; desire him to put a vigour into your grace, water the seeds, and blow up the divine spark.

Our Saviour desired assisting and strengthening grace for Peter, when he foresaw the devil's preparations to worry him, *Luke 22. 31, 32.* So should we for ourselves, and Christ will not be backward to second us in it ; yea, he will prevent us, and send us in an auxiliary force over and above the standing habit, which makes up the new creature. We need the gales of heaven to blow us forward, the concurrence of God to his gracious creature, as well as his common concurrence to his natural. Is it not the highest reason to engage all in the defence, and strengthening that which is the delight of God, the happiness of the

soul, and the envy of the devil? What is worth our care, if this be thought worthy of our neglect? Sloth in preserving and strengthening, argues a lesser value of a thing. Would you lose beauty for deformity, health for sickness? Would you lose the pleasure of heaven for the anguish of hell?

Preserve this image then from being defaced, and look that Satan draw no more black lines in your hearts. *Skin for skin, and all a man hath, will he give for his life:* Eat his own flesh to preserve his life, as long as he can. Oh then! if I may so say, soul for soul, and all that you have you should give and employ, for maintaining this spiritual life, which is as much above a natural life, as the light of the sun above the light of a taper: every day dress the lamps, as the priests did in the temple. It is for want of this strengthening it, that we have so little liveliness in duty. It is for want of this excitation, that we walk so often in darkness. What have we else to do but this? Preservation and strengthening of life, is the chief design of men in the world. Is not a divine life of more worth? Let not then the cares of our bodies surpass those for our souls, and our fondness to natural life, exceed our affection to spiritual life. We know but in part, we see but as in a glass darkly. The inclinations of our hearts to righteousness, are not in their full strength.

3. *Grow up to a taller stature.* There must be a daily putting off the old man, and a putting on the new; a *renewing the inward man day by day*, 2 Cor. 4. 16. And though at the first regeneration, there is the forming all the essential parts of grace, yet afterwards there is a daily augmentation (the Galatians were both knowing God, and known of him, Gal. 4. 9; yet of these did the apostle travail till Christ was formed again, ver. 19.) till the design of Christ be fully complied with, and the soul grown up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, by the participation of his nature. As providence is a continued creation, so growth is a

continued regeneration. As a man grows in reason by new improvements, so ought a Christian in grace, by new additions. Things are not ripened at once. The spirits in raw and immature bodies are depressed by gross and earthly mixtures with them, till they are encouraged by the sun and showers, and thereby able to digest the crude parts, and arrive at perfection.

1. This must be. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall be stronger and stronger, Job 17.9.* The new nature can no more remain at a stand than a living tree can, till it come up to the measures of its nature. It is the nature of seed to propagate itself, and spread its virtue into branches and fruit: It will be aspiring to that perfection which nature hath allotted to it. If you do not grow, it is a sign there is no life in you: It is but a common gift, or a common grace, at best; the counterfeit, not the reality of the new creature: living natures do thrive: pieces of art stand at a stay: he is no member of Christ, but as a wooden leg or arm, not knit by any vital hand, but some extrinsic ligaments, not fed with the increases of God, because he doth not grow. To content ourselves with a low degree of grace, makes us unworthy of the benefit of regeneration, and below those that pretend to a likeness to God.

Our spiritual growth must be *uniform*. As it is one habit which is infused, so it equally thrives in all the parts of it: an unequal growth is the effect of a disease, not of nature. As nature causes a proportion of parts in the make, so likewise a proportion of parts in the growth. It is not a growth in faith, and a decay in love; or a growth in love, and a decay in faith. To pretend to the one without the other, is to have an head without an heart, a life without blood or spirits. A natural man may grow in some moral ornaments, as a dead man in hair and nails: but a spiritual vitality shews itself in an equal increase of all the members in the new creature. And it is best dis-

cerned by the thriving of those graces which are most contrary to your natural disposition, which cannot so well be discerned in those which have some foundations in moral nature; as humility hath in a mild disposition, which by the addition of grace, advanceth to an eminent humility: but a new creature thrives in those graces, which were most contrary to his corrupt nature, now over-mastered. The second draught of a picture, defaceth not one line or two of the former, but the whole frame, to make it more near the original. And thus a new creature ought to *grow as the vine and revive as the corn*, in all the branches and fruits proper to its nature, *Hos. 14. 7.*

By this growth we *please God*, and pleasure ourselves. The more illustrious any work is, the more glory redounds to the artist. If the beginnings of the new creation be so amiable, as to make heaven itself in love with it, how infinitely will God be pleased to see it grow to maturity, among the whirlwinds and storms of temptations; every increase adding new colours and lustre to this beauty, will renew the jubilee in heaven. Thus will God pronounce it good at first, and very good, the nearer it comes to perfection, as he did in the creation of the world. By this growth you will have a greater capacity for heaven: for if the first new creation capacitates a man for glory; the higher it springs, the more beautiful the divine nature grows; the nearer it is to glory, and the fitter to be planted in an eternal paradise; the more a right to heaven will appear to yourselves.

4. Behave yourselves *in your ordinary walk*, as new creatures of another rank from the world. It is the inference the apostle makes from the new state wherein the Ephesians were; *For you were sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord: walk as children of the light, Eph. 5. 8.* You must bring forth fruits meet for regeneration, meet for him by whom you are renewed, as the ground does herbs, meet for him by whom it is dressed, *Heb. 6. 7.*

Then *adorn the gospel*, whereby the divine impression is made upon you. The apostle argues against lying, and by the same reason, against all sin from this head, *Col. 3. 9, 10.* The gospel adorns the soul by its impression; the soul should adorn the gospel by its conversation, *adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour in all things; Tit. 2. 2.* Let the writing of the law in the heart, appear on the other side of the life; and the divine light in your hearts, shine in your outward man, as a candle through a lanthorn, that *God may be glorified, Matt. 5. 16.* Let not lust and sin, extraneous to the new nature, bear any rule in any action: Let no unworthy action reproach your profession. Do nothing unbecoming one who is like him that rules the world, unbecoming that word and gospel which God has magnified above all his name. Defile not your garments; we can never walk with God but in *white, Rev. 3. 4;* in the whiteness of purity, not in the blackness of sin. Do not any works of Satan, with the nature of God upon you. Indeed we may be ashamed, that when there is so much of the image of Christ in the gospel, there should be so little of the image of Christ in our lives. Walk as those that are enrolled among the spirits of just men made perfect, as those who have the honour to be of the assembly of the first-born; live to God, not to yourselves. The more wicked the generation is you live in, the more it is your duty to shine, as the lights of heaven, in the darkness of the earth, *Phil. 2. 15.* and the more it will be your commendation, as it was the praise of Job, that he was upright in the land of Uz, among the race of profane Esau, not among the offspring of praying Jacob; *That man was perfect, and feared God, Job 1. 1.*

Live also above *affections* to a drossy world, if you would honour your new nature. An earthly spirit cannot be the effect of a heavenly birth; let not the rattles of your childhood be your present pleasure, or the bewitching world have any influence upon you.

The world is no fit boundary for the soul in its natural capacity, much less in its spiritual ; it is too empty for an immortal soul, much more for a divine nature. Let not any thing on this side God be your darling, [but your footstool, to mount you nearer heaven. Value them only as they enable you to do the higher duties of religion without distracting cares, and are subservient to the honouring God in the world. As the new creature was not redeemed with a vile price, so it is not endued with so sordid a nature, as to be much in love with these things. The conquest of this is one of the first fruits of the new birth. *Whatsoever is born of God, overcomes the world,* 1 John 5. 4 ; there is a mighty antipathy between the world, and any thing that is the offspring of God. There cannot be so much ignorance of the things of another world, as to prize so vile a piece, as a house with walls and furniture, infected with a sinful leprosy. Let the inward contempt of the blandishments of it grow up in you ; distract not yourselves with cares for it, but trust in God's promise, and leave things to the conduct of his wise providence. It is inconsistent with a new nature to lie at the bottom of this great sea, sucking up weeds and sand, and never lifting up its head above water, towards heaven.

You should also be much in the thoughts and views of the *divine original* of your nature. Shall the new nature seldom look up to that place whence it descended, or cast its eye upon that beautiful hand that framed it? Surely the new creature cannot be so unnatural. Employ your souls in exercises of an unbounded love to God, a settled delight in him, a high esteem of the righteousness of his nature, and an habitual walking with him ; let the esteem of him, and vilifying yourselves, be your daily employment. The looking upon him will transform you more into his image ; by this spiritual converse you will partake of a new brightness, and clearer lineaments.

Every view will leave a greater perfection upon his image in you, by a reflection of glory, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. By this your hearts will be more suitable to those regions of blessedness to which the divine image is hastening; it will make you sweat out some corruption every day, and advance you some steps towards the state of bliss.

Again, fix your aims on *a state of perfection*. You are to walk, not to stand still. Never rest, till all that righteousness which of right belongs to that divine nature in you, be conferred upon you; breathe after a more close conjunction with the original. Keep up in a due sprightliness your detestations of sin, which you had when you were first enlivened; with what a holy indignation you flung away your lusts, with a *Get you hence; and, What have I to do any more with idols?* Set an edge upon this hatred every day, sharpen your indignation more and more. Preserve in your souls those affections which rose up in you, when the irresistible charms of divine love first allured you, when you first cast your eyes upon this new likeness and image of God; quicken them daily, and *press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ*.

And let your affections be carried *to every thing which partakes of the same image*. There is in all creatures a kindness to those of their own nature; the most ravenous do not prey upon their own species; all men, descending from Adam, having the same nature, have some kindness to those of their own kind; and all descending from Christ have the same nature, the same affections and instincts. It is in love and holiness wherein God doth decipher himself in the soul; he would not be drawn in any other attributes in the heart of man; and thus in the scripture he publishes himself in the abstract, as holiness and love, delighting to be imitated by his creature in those two perfections; *God is love, and he that dwells in God, dwells in love,* 1 *John* 4. 16. Love is there-

fore the nature of the new creature ; and love to the same objects whereon God's love is fixed ; first himself, then his image in his creature. So the love of God, and that of a new creature, go hand in hand together ; first, the affections of the new nature stream out to God, as the prime and original beauty ; then to all new creatures, as they partake more or less of this divine image. This universal charity to God, grace, and good men, is the inseparable property of the new creature, the highest perfection of it, and the beginning of a state of glory. Love all those that partake of this divine nature.

Finally, endeavour to bring *others* into this new state. It is the property of goodness to be diffusive of itself ; and God, the highest goodness, is the most communicative ; the divine nature should imitate him in this. No nature but delights to propagate itself. The new nature ought not to be sluggish in it ; since the great change lies in the end, since the glory of God is set up as its main intendment, it will oblige it to propagate holiness and righteousness, whereby God is most glorified ; for thereby the number is increased, to represent him on earth, and praise him in heaven. No sooner was Paul renewed, but he endeavours to bring all the world into the same frame. The apostate angels, being revolted from God, labour to sink all the world into the same disposition. Fire communicates, by touch, its own nature to all matter that comes near it, and turns the hardest metals into its own likeness. So ought that holy fire in a new creature, to labour to convert every thing into its own flames. This is a peculiar mark set upon the evangelical times, and the special fruit of a gospel impression. *Many people shall say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, Isa. 2. 3.* It should be your endeavour, that all about you may be the better for you. Strive to affect your children and servants with a sense of the corruption of nature derived from Adam, and the necessity of being im-

planted in the new Head of the world, and partaking of another nature from him; thus to be a fellow-worker with God, is the most absolute work of grace; as to beget in its own likeness, is the most perfect work of nature.

And to persuade you to walk and act as new creatures, consider,

1. The *excellency* of your birth. It is a birth of heaven, a resemblance to God; do nothing below it, or unworthy of it. Is it fit for you to lie among the pots, and smut yourselves? The consideration of the relation you bear to God, should inspire you with heroic resolutions for his glory. You are the only persons that keep up God's honour in the world, and his final anger from it. Whenever you are tempted, reflect upon yourselves, as Nehemiah, *Should such a man as I do this?* *Nehem.* 6. 11; or as Joseph to his mistress, *Behold, my master hath committed all that he hath to my hand; behold God has put his divine nature in my heart, and shall I do this wickedness?* Consider in every action, what that God you call Father by regenerating grace, that Christ who is the great exemplar and copy of the image in you, would do in such cases and circumstances. How unworthy is it for a living man to do dead works? As your life springs from the highest principle, let it be employed for the highest ends. Was ever any prince ashamed of his honour? And shall any new creature be ashamed of the particular badge of heaven upon it; of that righteousness, which is the true nobility of his nature? Holiness is the beauty of an intellectual and rational creature; it must then be your highest honour to live conformably to the dignity of your nature.

2. It was the *intention of God* you should walk in a nobler manner than the rest of the world. Did God infuse into Adam a soul of a higher nature than that of beasts, to enable him to live only the life of beasts? God intended, by the infusion of this new principle,

that you should live above the sphere of humanity, and the rate of man. How doth the apostle chide the Corinthians, because they did not advance above the life of mere man? And therefore gives them a title chiefly belonging to the unregenerate world; *Are you not carnal, and walk as men?* 1 Cor. 3. 3. Our Saviour expects a more worthy carriage from his children, than what barely nature can teach them; he would have them as God, and imitators of him, *Matt. 5. 44, 45, 46, 47*; and do something peculiar to this new state, which cannot be done by any unregenerate man in the world. Your holiness is not to be of the common level with the morality of the world, but such as may set forth the praise of God, 1 *Pet. 2. 9*: they are *a chosen generation*, therefore should have choice conversation; *a royal priesthood*, therefore princes' deportment; *a holy nation and peculiar people*, therefore should have holy and peculiar behaviour: they should thus be public evangelists, to set forth the graciousness and righteousness of God. There is also the highest obligation, because *he hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light*. God intended that their conversation should be such as should amaze the world into a love of holiness, and admiration of that light which gives them such excellent directions, and that nature which enables them to so exact a walk. God's temples were not intended to be made dunghills.

3. Not to walk as new creatures, is *a dishonour to God*. You that do not walk answerable to your high calling, do more highly dishonour him than all other persons; you are quite contrary to his image, and represent God to the world as they would have him, not what he is in his own nature; for by a careless walk, the world will judge God to be like you, or you very unlike to God. Is God holy and you impure; God merciful, and you revengeful; God, a God of peace, and you fomenters of malice and contention? To pretend to his image with such qualities, is to dis-

parage his nature, and rather degrade God to a likeness to the flesh, than to mount up to a true resemblance of him; *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself, Ps. 50. 21.* It is a disgrace to a noble father, to have a swinish, clownish, ill-bred person pretend to be his son. But how much is the contrary a glory to Christ, as delicious fruit and choice flowers credit the beams of the sun? What a mighty pleasure is it to God to behold a suitable walk of his new creatures? He loves them; and *his countenance doth behold the upright, Psal. 11. 7.* How much must he who is holiness itself, take complacency in the holiness of it? If he loves it while in a low degree, no question but he loves it more in a higher exaltation: How does the Holy Ghost repeat Enoch's walking with God twice, in *Gen. 5. 22, 24,* to witness his pleasure in it.

4. Not to walk suitable to your new creation, is a *mighty disadvantage to yourselves.* Though a new creature does not totally lose his grace, if a temptation deflower his purity, yet his grace suffers an impair, and perhaps he may never recover the same degree of grace and comfort he had before. It is a question whether David ever had his sails filled with such strong gales of the Spirit, after his fall, as he had before. The marks of a disease will hang about us after the disease is cured; and the same stock of health may never be restored again. If you do let your hearts run out at any time to any sinful pleasure, though it may not raze out the image, yet it will make you more unfit for those views of God which can only maintain it. When you come before him, after such a departure, how will your hearts recoil upon you? With what pleasure can you look upon him whom you have so abused in his image in your souls, and in his image in his law? Besides, every unworthy walk detracts somewhat from the weight of that crown, you might otherwise expect to be reserved in heaven for you, and makes it of a greater allay; but if you keep

close to the law in the word, and the law in your hearts, what communications will you have from God? What inward touches and feelings of him? How hastily will he run to meet you, and embrace you with all his affection? *Thou meetest him that rejoices and worketh righteousness, Isa. 64. 5.* How intimately will he wind himself into the secret corners of your hearts, *and make his abode with you, John 14. 23;* and, like fire in every part of iron, fill every part of the new man with a glowing and divine heat.

5. Such an exact walk will mightily *stop the current of sin.* It may justly be feared, the sins of many have taken too much heart from the unsuitable carriages of professors. But a walk according to the rule of the new creation, might inflame others to godliness, at least stifle some corrupt motions, suspend some inclinations to sin, and for a time bind up the devil in them. This is the greatest charity to the world; by other benefits we advantage particular persons; by a holy example, all that behold us. It strikes an awful reverence into the hearts of men, as being a ray of God; what the gospel enjoins, are things comely, and of good report, many of them lovely and illustrious, even in a carnal eye; therefore such expressions of a gospel-impression would engender admirations of it, cast a lustre upon the truth of God; men will look upon such works with reverence, and *glorify God in the day of their visitation or conversion,* as Calvin understands it. To be a holy people, is to be sought out, they are both joined, *Isa. 62. 12.* Many by seeing the holiness of the church in gospel-times, shall be induced to give up their names to the Lord: it will tend more to the regeneration of others, than a thousand sermons; it will raise the reputation of christianity, and cause them to believe it to be of a divine extract; it would stir men up to a holy emulation to be like them. And beholding the law of God transcribed in the life, it would convincingly answer the cavils of the world, and demonstrate the commands

they count grievous, to be in themselves practicable. But whither is this gospel ornament, we have been speaking of, fled? Where is it to be found? How few walk as new creatures, as becomes the gospel, however they profess it, and pretend a zeal for it?

The *second* exhortation is to those who lie *still buried in the ruins of the old Adam*: who carry the image of beasts in their lives, or of devils in their hearts, or both. Such I would advise, earnestly to seek this new creature state. Let not your hearts be besotted to a neglect of it, and stupified into endless torments, which will, as surely as you live, be the dreadful issue, if this be not attained: to be so long under the gospel, and retain the obstinacy of an old nature to God, is a high aggravation. Talk not of sparing the old man; it is your enemy, wound it to death, use the utmost severity towards it; put it off, leave not a rag, if possible, behind; send it away, as Abraham did Hagar, and without so much as a bottle of water, to despoil it of any hopes of return. But, alas, how do you cherish and hug this enemy! How do you value it, as if it were a part of yourselves; as if you could not live without poison, or be happy without misery! How do you bid the new man stand far from you, as if it were a real torment to be in the arms of Christ, and the new creation your disease, not your felicity! Though you were the most unblameable in your lives, free from any pretence of an accusation there, what were you without this change, but devils in the garb of angels of light; poison in fair cabinets, and the natures of serpents in the bodies of men? What is become of your souls? Are they so immersed in flesh, that nothing of Spirit can make impressions upon them? Have men quite forsworn the attaining any other excellency, than what mere nature bestowed upon them? What deformity do you find in God, that you slight his image, which should be imprinted on you? What frightful thoughts have you of the Spirit that solicits you? How come your souls so senseless of

their real happiness? O what a happy thing were it, if this day Christ were formed in all our hearts, that though we are worse than the stable wherein our Saviour was born in the flesh, we might become the sanctuary of our great Lord and his Spirit; it is then the angels would renew their song at the birth of Christ in the heart, as well as that in the world, *glory to God in the highest, peace and eternal good will* to such a soul. If you have any strugglings in your hearts, any convictions upon your consciences, and make not a further progress, these will be so far from being your advantage, that they will add an emphasis to your damnation.

Let me use some motives to press you on this subject.

1. Shall not the *loathsomeness and misery* of your present state startle you? It is a nature that makes you *the children of wrath*, *Eph. 2. 3.* Were your old natures acceptable to God, what need of any change? But the requiring this change, demonstrates the old nature to be abhorred by God. This nature is the devil's, the serpent's poison, a deformed leprosy; it is the pain, anguish, torment, rack of every man that dies in it; it smells rank of hell. Is not another nature then desirable? When you commit some grievous sin, to which you are not accustomed, are you not dejected? Do you not think worse of yourselves for it? And are you not pleased when you escape it? If the reformation of one sin be a desirable thing, how much more the reformation of the whole nature? For if a drop of that filth bubbling up in the life, be so loathsome, what loathsomeness is there in the heart, where the fountain springs? What gall of bitterness must be in the root, when a little of the fruit is so bitter to your taste? * Corruption is the dishonour of your natures, the poison of your souls, the cause of all your unhappiness. It is this that banished you from Paradise,

* Daille, sur, *Colos.* p. 247.

ravishing away your pleasures, subjected you to vanity, the wrath of God, the hatred of angels, and tyranny of devils; it is this that hath deformed your souls; dispossess yourselves of this cursed spirit, give yourselves no rest till you have conquered it; never say, it is incorporated in your entrails and marrow. Where the question is about your everlasting happiness, let no excuse prevail.

2. Shall not the excellency of *another state* allure you? It is the excellency of any piece of art to come near its original; that star is most glorious that doth most partake of the sun's light and power. The very light of nature tells us, the state wherein we are, is not our perfection; something the soul flutters at beyond this, though it naturally understands not what it is; is it not then the happiness of the soul, to be reduced to its true centre, to be reinstated in an unspotted nature, to return to a due respect to those ends for which it was made, to have the understanding conversant about the loveliest object, the will inclined to the most amiable goodness, and the affections twining about it and growing up with it; can it be any thing else but the highest excellency, to live the life of God; to have the image of God wrought upon you, and your souls conformed to his holiness? Can that be an imperfection, which makes you like an infinite righteousness? It was the highest perfection of man to be made according to the image of God, wherein God, as in a glass, might see a resemblance of himself. Is it not then a desirable thing to have it drawn again with more lively and lasting colours, after sin and Satan have so basely defaced it? All other things are not the perfection of man's nature; for whatsoever else there is, is possessed by beasts or devils; the pleasures of sense, by beasts; the endowments of knowledge, by devils; but the divine nature, by neither: this therefore, which neither devils can be blessed with, nor beasts capable of, is only the perfection of the soul, more excellent than the soul itself, since that which

perfects, is more excellent than that which is perfected by it. Original corruption destroys your health, sullies your purity, enslaves your liberty. Regeneration restores your health, expels your impurity, and knocks off your fetters. Let the excellency of this better state prevail with you.

3. Will the *honour* of the thing allure you? Where shall you meet with so honourable a relation? It is more honour to be a new creature in rags, than a carnal prince in purple, though the greatest in the world, for you will then be settled heirs of all the promises. Is it not then more glorious to partake of the nature of that God, who created and commands the world; than by the force of the old nature to be slaves to sordid lusts, which are both a drudgery and a disease? As a spirit is more excellent than the body; so a spiritual being and frame is more honourable than a fleshly. * There is a greater relation between God and a new creature, than between natural fathers and sons; for a renewed man hath the whole divine Spirit in him; and by virtue of this, all things will, one time or other, rise up and call you blessed; you will be more allied to Jesus Christ, by the inward formation of him in your hearts, than the blessed virgin by the conception of Christ, *Luke 11. 27.* She was more happy by partaking of Christ in her heart, than by conferring a flesh on Christ from her body. What an honourable thing is it to be moulded into the divine likeness! Can you be more glorious, unless you were Gods?

4. Will *pleasure* charm you? View it here. Pleasure must necessarily follow this new state, as light the sun: there is no state without a pleasure pertaining to it; pleasures of sense belong to a life of sense; intellectual pleasures, to a life of reason; divine pleasures, to a divine nature. *All the ways of wisdom are*

* Neringberg. de adorat. lib. 1 cap. 12. p. 71.

ways of pleasantness, Prov. 3. 17. An infinite perfection is attended with an infinite happiness; the more lineaments then you have of the divine perfection, the more tastes you will have of the divine happiness. God hath an infinite pleasure in his own perfections: it is his felicity to enjoy himself, to view himself. Pleasure then must naturally result from this image drawn in the soul; and as naturally, I conceive, according to the degrees of it, as the pleasure God hath in his own holiness and love. The pleasure of heaven is the perfection of holiness; therefore there is a pleasure also attending the draught of it here; an imperfect pleasure from the imperfect form of it, as a perfect pleasure from the compleating of in glory. What want can there be of pleasure, if you come into this state? Will you not be conversant about the highest object, and that with your choicest faculties? Can this be without some communications of the pleasure of God, as well as his nature? You will find a pleasure in the very strugglings to get into this state, much more in it.

5. Do you profess yourselves *enemies* to the devil? Why then will you gratify him by continuing in an old nature? He keeps a jubilee when he can draw men into great sins, and bind them under them; his main industry is to make men like himself, and continue them in that likeness. The whole world, that are not of God, lie wrapped up in the devil's image; *The whole world lies in wickedness, 1 John 5. 19*: or in the wicked one; as is more consonant to the former verses. Satan and natural men are closely united together, though the latter dream not of it. His intent in assaulting man in paradise, was to destroy the righteousness of his nature; his design now is to hinder the restoration of it, by keeping men off from the means, making them have false thoughts of the unpleasantness of it, as though it were a state injurious to man's tranquillity, by suppressing convictions which are the

first portals to the courts of blessedness. Oh, gratify not the devil; fly from his image, that you may fly from his misery.

6. Why will you cross *your own sentiments*, when sober reason in you may have leave to speak? What do you think was the end for which you came into the world? Was it to serve the devil, or God? Whose image is it most rational for you to bear? Are there not innate desires in men to be as God? Adam desired it unlawfully: the same spirit runs through the veins of his posterity: God hath shown you a way in his word, whereby you may lawfully desire it, and successfully accomplish it. Do not all creatures, one way or other, instruct you in it? Do they not all run back to their fountain? Rivers into the sea, that they may have a new foundation in it; beams retracted to the sun: And why not the soul to God? Do they not all declare the glory of God? And shall man stand alone? and what way is there for him to declare God's glory, but by the reformation of his nature? You once had this desirable nature in your first head, and lost it; you may have the re-possession in the second head, and for ever preserve it: you cannot deny your obligation to have it, therefore you cannot deny your duty to seek it: you know your souls received their original from him, you likewise know that there is an obligation to return to him. As the spirit naturally returns to God who gave it; so it cannot be happy in that return, unless it first morally return to God to be formed like him.

7. *Nothing else* can advantage you, if you want this new creature state. You can no more enjoy happiness by Christ without it, than Adam did in paradise in the presence of God with the nakedness of his nature. His being in paradise, the richer part of the whole lower creation, could neither heal him nor content him, after the loss of the purity of his nature: in that happy place his conscience racked him; there he fled from his Creator, which in his innocent nature

he never attempted to do ; and all the pleasures of that place could not restore him to God's favour, or his own peace, without the promise of a seed, and by that seed the restoration in part of his former image.

8. Lastly, take this for your encouragement, it is *attainable* by the meanest person. In the new creation *there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free : but Christ is all, and in all, Col. 3. 11* : that is, there is no distinction of any ; * the eloquence of the Greek, or the rudeness of the Barbarian ; the uncircumcision of the Gentile, or the circumcision of the Jew ; the baseness of the slave, or the liberty of the freeman, doth neither advantage nor disadvantage them in this work of the new creation ; and he names Scythians, as being the rudest and most unpolished among all the known Gentiles. No natural endowments advantage us ; no worldly indigences hinder us. The soul of the meanest is as capable of the new creation, as the soul of the highest : there is nothing required to the putting on the new man, which is not attainable by the one as well as the other : yea, sooner by those of the meanest endowments, as wanting that fuel for their pride, which is the chief hinderance to a gospel impression. God values nothing but his own image, neither is he any more taken with the glittering parts and wisdom of men, than our Saviour with the glory of the temple, which his ignorant disciples did so much admire.

But what *means* must be used, to obtain this excellent privilege ? I answer, It is indeed the work of God, yet means may be used. † He that observes precepts of morality, shall gain moral habits ; and by practising acts of temperance, become temperate. So he that follows the rules given in the word, for attaining the new creation, shall have it produced in him ; and the more assuredly, because it is not produced by him,

* Daille, sur. Coloss. p. 238, &c.

† Jackson, Vol. 4. ch. 21. p. 399.

but by God, who is more able to create new hearts in us, than the unregenerate man is to work a moral reformation.

1. Be deeply sensible of *original corruption*. View yourselves in the glass of Adam, reflect upon the fall, and the dreadful consequences of it; take an exact account of the enmity of thy nature, as the word represents it. We must acquaint ourselves with our sin and misery, and have self-emptying thoughts, before we can seek after a new creature. Man is apt to think his nature good enough; and this makes him the more miserable and wretched; and causes him to think there needs no change, *Rev. 3. 17.*

2. Be deeply *humbled* before God. Lay yourselves low before him, and *abhor yourselves in dust and ashes*: complain of your corrupt nature; melt before God, dissolve into tears. When you are weary and heavy laden, sensible of it by contrition, Christ will give rest by regeneration. The heart must be melted before it be made new. Pride must be humbled; we must be vile in our own eyes, as well as vile in our own nature. *The Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, Psal. 34. 18.*

3. Often meditate of the *excellency* of this state, as it is represented in the word. Men hear and forget; they leave behind them what they have heard, they hide it not in their hearts, therefore does not the word profit them: think often of the honour of being a new creature, as well as the necessity of being a new creature; if you have any thoughts arising of resting upon your knowledge, or morality, or good meaning, say to your soul, as the apostle in another case, O, my soul, *covet earnestly the best gifts, yet show I unto thee a more excellent way*. If any imagination arise, which flatters you with hopes of being in Christ without an inward change, regard it as an angel from the bottomless pit, sent from the great impostor to seduce you from your happiness.

4. Fixedly resolve not to be at rest, *till you procure it* at the hands of God. Perhaps you may have had some resolutions before, and some diversion hath chilled those purposes; waver not with uncertain velleities between inclination and aversion. Content not yourselves with sluggish wishes and yawning desires; but put heart and hand to the work. Set vigorously to it, and those sons of Anak, those seeming terrifying difficulties, will fly before you. Where doth the scripture tell you, that God will neglect his laborious creature, and stand by without assisting him in his serious endeavours? No, no; God will not be wanting in his power, nor the Spirit in his operations, if we firmly purpose and strongly pursue; *God is near to all that call upon him in truth, Psal. 145. 18*; that is, to all that call upon him with a true purpose and desire for his mercy: he is near by his merciful presence, not by his essential presence only. Fool not away your vows in vain mirth, nor drown your resolutions in sensual pleasures. Say as David in another case, *I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will in good earnest endeavour that I may become a new creature, Psal. 119. 106.*

5. Be much in *prayer*. Regeneration is against the inclinations of old nature; intermit not therefore to call earnestly for help from heaven; it is best attained upon the knee. God is the foundation of all vitality; the life of grace is no less the effect of his breath than the soul of Adam. Go to Christ, in whom, as in a steward, is treasured up a fulness of grace to dispense to him that seeks it. Beg earnestly of the Spirit, who is the officer appointed, the great limner to draw this image in us. Why can you not go to Christ, as well as the leper, and lie sobbing before him, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, thou canst change my nature?* Do it constantly, do it fervently, and take notice with what inspirations you will be filled. But do you solicit him for this mercy

at all? Has God one breath from thee in a whole week to this purpose? Have you since you heard it pressed from the necessity of it, made your case known to God? Has there been one groan, one sigh for it? What a stupid creature is man! Time will not always last; God will be solicited for it, and it is fit he should. An old nature is like *the old serpent*, it cannot be cast out without fasting and prayer. The great changes of the soul are chiefly wrought in prayer and the word: our very looking up to God, and upon God, in humble prayer, makes a gradual transformation in our souls; we never are in the mount with him, but our souls, as Moses's face, look quite of another hue and colour. By frequent converse with friends, we grow more into an imitation of the excellent qualities we perceive in them. Converse with God in frequent prayer and meditation, and you will grow more and more into a holy likeness to him.

6. Attend diligently upon the *word*. To pray to God to renew you, and slight the word which he hath appointed as an instrument to effect it, is to dishonour God; for while you pray to him to be a Father, you contemn him as a governor, by neglecting the means he has appointed for such ends. As the devil formed himself in the soul, by man's listening to, and sucking in his temptation; so Christ forms himself in the soul, by our sucking in the milk of the word; as the disposition of the nurse is, by the milk, conveyed to the infant. It is wrought by the gospel; *For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel*, 1 Cor. 4. 15. Not by the word of God at large, which consists of law as well as gospel. So the regenerations of old were wrought, not by the law, but by that of gospel, mixed in that administration. By this means you may get a spiritual knowledge, and discard that ignorance which is the foundation of an alienation from the life of God; *Alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts*, Eph. 4. 18.

Study the promises, and plead them before the Lord, for by these you are *made partakers of the divine nature*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. Resist not any divine impressions, by a sluggishness and a listlessness. Be not in love with your spiritual death, nor cherish the bondage to sin in your will, when God makes motions to enliven and enlarge you. Welcome the breathings of the Spirit. Open your souls, as some flowers do for the sun; drink in the drops of heaven, as the earth does the rain; and when the Spirit quickens you by its influences, quicken the Spirit by your earnest supplications, *Cant.* 5. 16, make much of him, persuade his stay; breathe, O blessed Spirit, upon this wilderness. Never leave till it be changed into a fruitful garden, both pleasant to, and fruitful for, my blessed Creator and gracious Redeemer.

THE
EFFICIENT
OF
REGENERATION.

John 1. 13.

WHICH WERE BORN, NOT OF BLOOD, NOR OF THE WILL
OF THE FLESH, NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, BUT OF
GOD.

PART I.

THE TOTAL INABILITY OF MAN.

*Connection of the Text—Explication of it—Division
of it—Doctrines deduced from it—Man cannot re-
generate himself—God challenges his works as his
own—The titles given to it—Original corruption—
Scripture representations—The inability of man uni-
versal—The regenerate sensible of this—The nature
of human impotence—Evil habits innate, or con-
tracted—How the inability of man to renew himself
appears.*

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 lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* John Baptist, who, ver. 4, &c. was to bear witness of this light, was a light by our Saviour's assertion, *a burning and a shining light,* John 5. 35; but not that *true light* which was promised *to be a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth,* Isa. 49. 6. 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. *We know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ,* 1 John 5. 20. the natural light and Son of God.

1. True, as opposed to the *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 his light from him. *Which lighteth every man that comes into the world.* Some join coming into the world, to light, and read it thus: *He is the light coming into the world, which lighteth 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 only by those who deny the deity of our Saviour, or are somewhat affected to them that do.

But 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 and kindled by him. As all the light the world hath 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; *The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, Prov. 20. 27*; 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 upon 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 hath 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 hath a power to do so; and actually lights every man that shuts not his eyes against it. He enlightens every man *actually*: taking it *distributively*, not collectively; that whosoever is enlightened in the world, hath it communicated from Christ; *The Lord upholds all that fall: and raises up all those that are bowed down; Psal. 145. 14*; as many as are upheld and raised, are upheld and raised by God. He indeed *shines 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 de-

scends 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 knew him not.* Ingratitude hath been the constant portion of the Mediator, from the beginning of 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 were due to him.

He aggravates this contempt of Christ: by the *general right* he had; *He came to his own*, ver. 11, meaning the world, it being put in the neuter gender; the whole world was his propriety and his goods, yet they knew not their owner: in this worse than the ox and ass.

And he further aggravates their contempt of him 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*, *οἱ ἰδίοι*, 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 he proffers most kindness; the people of Tyre and Sidon, and 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; *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,* ver. 12.

Where is, 1. The subject: those *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.* 2. 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. Paul uses the word adoption: but 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, saith 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 wanted 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

* Mercer in Hos. 2. 1.

† Cajetan.

‡ Amyraldus Fine Thes. Salmur. Spirit Adoption, Thess. 6.

the law being called carnal or fleshly ordinances, *Heb.* 9. 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 judge 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; *Of his own will begat he us, James* 1. 18; exclusive of all other wills mentioned before. It is the sole efficiency of God, he hath the sole hand in it; therefore we are said to be both begotten and born of him, *1 John* 5. 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*.

Shewing thereby, that there was no *necessity* in him to renew us; no motive but from himself. And that there is no *merit* on our parts. Man cannot merit, say the Papists, before grace; no child can merit his own birth; no man, grace.

Doct. I. 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. II. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

Doct. 1. 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;

1. God *challenges this work as his own*, excluding the creature from any share as a cause. *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, Ezek. 36. 25, 26, 27.* 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 assistances 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 transaction alone, without the hand of free-will. *None can come, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw them, John 6. 44.* The mission of the Mediator, and the attraction of the creature, are by the same hand. Our Saviour could not have come unless the Father had sent him, nor can any 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 hath 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* doth 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 afterwards 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 anything spiritually good*. So then, *they that are in the flesh, cannot please God*, Rom. 8. 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 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. 8. 2. To be sinners, and to be *without strength*, is one and the same thing in the apostle's judgment. *While we were yet without strength*, Rom. 5. 68; afterwards, *while we were yet sinners*; he doth 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 any 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; declare, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned. Isa. 43. 26, 27.

5. This weakness is *universal*. Sin hath made its sickly impressions in every faculty. The *mind* is dark, Eph. 4. 18; he cannot know, 1 Cor. 2. 14; there is a stoniness in the heart, he cannot bend, Zech. 7. 12; there is enmity in the will, he cannot be subject, Rom. 8. 7. As to faith, he cannot believe, John 12. 39. As to the Spirit, the worker of faith, he cannot receive; that is, of himself, John 14. 17; acknowledge Christ he cannot, 1 Cor. 12. 3. As to practice, he cannot bring forth fruit, John 15. 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, for the most part so depraved as 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. 6. 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 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

* Senault, Corrupt, p. 8.

th come to work savingly upon them. Indee
 verty of spirit, or sense of our own emptiness,
 iency, and indigence, is the first gospel grace
 at in the soul, and stands in the head of all those
 noble qualifications in our Saviour's sermon, as fitting
 men for the kingdom of God; *Blessed are the poor in
 spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 5. 3.*
 And God in the whole progress of this work keeps be-
 lievers sensible of their own weakness, thereby to pre-
 serve them in a continual dependance 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?*

Answ. 1. It is not a *physical weakness* for want of
 faculties. Understanding we have, but not a spi-
 ritual 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 perfec-
 tion of human nature, which was to exercise acts
 spiritually good and acceptable to God. Had the fa-
 culties been lost, Adam had not been capable of a pro-
 mise or command, and consequently of ever sinning
 after. In Adam by creation we were possessed of
 it; in Adam by his corruption we were divested of it;
 we have not lost the *physical* but the *moral* nature of
 these faculties; not the faculties themselves, but the mo-
 ral goodness of them. As the elementary heat is left in a
 carcase, which yet is unfit to exercise any animal action
 for want of a soul to enliven it; so though the facul-
 ties 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 ex-
 cuse him in his most extravagant actions: no creature
 is bound to that which is simply impossible; nay,

* Ames Medul. lib. 1. cap. 12. Sect. 44.

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 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 hath 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 to 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 with which God endued him, 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. 10. 18*; and the word of the Lord is an apprehensible object, it is *near us, even in our mouths, Rom. 10. 8. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes, Psal. 19. 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; what is there, *you will not come to me? John 5. 40. How can you believe? ver. 44.* 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 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. 42. 7*, and cannot be delivered without the powerful voice of Christ, commanding and enabling them to go forth. *That thou mayest say to the prisoner, Go forth, Isa. 49. 9.*

The apostle lays the whole fault of men's not receiving the truth, upon their wills. *They received not the love of the truth, 2 Thes. 2. 10*; 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 custom in sin, cannot believe, cannot love God, can-

* White, Instit. Tom. 1. lib. 1. Sect. 15. p. 110, 111.

not bring himself into a good frame; as a musician cannot play a lesson when he hath the goat 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.* 2. 14.

Now these habits are either *innate*, or *contracted* and increased.—They are *innate*. By nature we have a habit of corruption, fundamental of all other that grow up in us. Man made a covenant with sin, by virtue of this covenant, sin had full power over him: what the apostle speaks of the marriage between man and the law, *Rom.* 7. 1, 2, 3, 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.* 5. 22. The habit has obtained an absolute sovereignty over it. *They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God, Hos.* 5. 4: 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 actuates them, as a man possessed by the devil is acted according to his pleasure; 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 tyranny, but a voluntary sovereignty on the part of the will; the will is pleased with it. As a woman, to use the similitude of the Holy Ghost in that place, is so over-ruled by her affections to other lovers, that she cannot think of returning to her former husband; but her unlawful love riseth with that force against all arguments from honesty and credit, that it keeps her still in the chains of unlawful lust.

So this is not a habit which oppresses nature, or forces 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, hath 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.

Evil habits are *contracted* and *increased* 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. *Can an Ethiopian change his skin? or a leopard his spots? then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil, Jer. 13. 23.* 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 over-ruling grace: it was a simple wound in Adam, but such as all nature could not cure, 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, hath 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 appears.

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 suits or corresponds 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 highest grace in regeneration: this hath 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 dependent 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. 7. 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 answer not the intendment of it. Adamants are unfit to receive impressions; and the best natural heart is no better. The soul with its faculties, is like a bird with its wings, clogged with slime 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 16. 14*. Lydia, it is said, worshipped God, there was religion in her, yet the Lord opened her heart for the gospel. Can any thing be more indisposed than a fountain that is always bubbling up poison? so is the heart of man, *Gen. 6. 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 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 readily holds 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 mere darkness, before his effectual calling ; *Who hath called us out of darkness*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 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, hath 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 deplorable 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.* 3. 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; *They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. 2. 12*; a singular pleasure. Where the heart and Satan 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 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 hath 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 counts 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

* Testard de grat. Thess. 151.

will burn, though one hath 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 polished by education, is enmity to God, and therefore unable, because unwilling to be subject to his law, *Rom.* 8. 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 gain-saying people*, *Rom.* 10. 21. It can converse with any thing but God; look with delight upon any thing 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 hath 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, *What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?* *Luke* 4. 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 his 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 ye*, *Acts* 7. 51. The animosity runs in the whole blood of nature. Neither the breathings of love, nor the thunders of

* Stoughton, Preacher's Dignity. p. 72.

threatenings, are listened to. 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 hath 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 particle 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. Satan, 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; *The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience*, Eph. 2. 2; where the same word *ὀνειργεῖν*, is used for the acting of Satan, and like-

wise for the acting of sin, in *Rom.* 7. 5, as it is for the acting of the spirit, *Phil.* 2. 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; *Who are taken captive by him at his will* * *2 Tim.* 2. 26, or for his will; 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 Satan 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* 11. 21. Can the will of man make a surrender of it, at God's demand, in spite of its governor? What power have we to throw off the 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 over-powering 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 Satan's net, can of itself do any thing 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 innocency, how can our defiled, dis-

* *Εἰς τὸ ἑκοίνῃσθαι αὐτῷ.*

ordered 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 hath decayed, can by its own strength recover itself, because it hath 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.

PART II.

MAN CANNOT PREPARE HIMSELF FOR THE RE-
CEPTION OF GRACE.

*The capacity of man for receiving the grace of God—
Immediate preparations—How some things done by
common grace are to be understood as preparations
—No preparations meritoriously connected with re-
generation—Proof of this—Man cannot naturally
understand the doctrine of regeneration—He cannot
naturally desire it.*

WE must now attend to some propositions essen-
dally included in this subject.

I. Man cannot *prepare himself* for the new birth.

I shall premise a few things, for the better under-
standing of this :

1. Man hath 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 organized 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 the 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.

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 of receiving 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 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 acknowledgment of the authority of Christ, and submission to his will, when he said, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts 9. 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 connexion between such preparations and regeneration*. They are not *causæ dispositivæ* 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 Magdalen was far from the one, yet received the other. If there were any thing in the subject that was the cause of it, the tenderest 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, where 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 opened by the Spirit of God. 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 matter 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 plowed 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 can there be before being? Nothing can be pre-existent in the son which merits generation by the father. The fair hand of moral nature can no 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 hath God indulged mere nature with any promise of adding grace upon the improvements of natural abilities? Whatsoever conditional promise there is, supposeth some grace superior to nature in the subject, as the condition of it; we do not find that God hath made himself a debtor to any preparation of the creature. But there is no obligation on God, by any thing 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 doth remove from man, as in every

* Vossii. Hist. Peleg. lib. 3. par. 2. Thess. 12. p. 349.

† Scrivenor's Course of Divinity, part 1. book 1. ch. 15. p. 52.

part of it his own act; *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. 3. 5.* 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 *ἀνταρκεια* but *ἰμμενότης*, 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 hath any man that he hath not received? 1 Cor. 4. 7.* The apostle excludes every thing 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 every thing, challengeth 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 hath 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 hath 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 doth good, no not one, Rom. 3. 10, 11, 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 defects, 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 any thing 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, hath 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* 21. 27, 29, and the temporary pardon

to Nineveh, upon their submission to the prophet's threatenings, *Jonah* 3. 8, 9, 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. We 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 were 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 to 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 course, 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; *If it be of works, then it is no more, grace,* *Rom.* 6. 11. 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.

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 tarrieth not for man, nor waits for the sons of men, *Micah* 5. 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 infant when he sanctifies it? If *without Christ we can do nothing*, *John* 15. 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.

The *first promise* of redemption and regeneration, intimates no such thing in man to either of them, *I will put enmity, &c.* *Gen.* 3. 15. the putting enmity into man against Satan is promised by God as his own work; there was a friendship struck up, a confederacy made, and Satan 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 bruiseth Satan in the heart, by his spirit, without any preparations on the

creature's part. For any thing I see, had man in the state of innocency 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 independency of God.

And let it be further considered, that 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 any thing 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.

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

And what preparation had any of *those, of whose conversion we read 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 through and full, and consequently a preparation, it must refer to that Spirit which our Saviour asserts to be the principal cause of it; *When he is come, that is, the comforter, he will reprove the world of sin, John 16. 8, 9.* 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. 12. 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.

Again, we ask 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 dead 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 prepares itself for a change.

5. 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 shews mercy, Rom. 9. 16*. It would change the whole tenor of the scripture, and make conversion not God's drawing of us, but our attraction of God; for he that disposes himself to grace, is in some sort the cause of that grace; as he that doth 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; *God works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Phil. 2. 13*. 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 dependen-

cy on the will of man; it is therefore called a creation, to show God's independence upon any thing as to this work.

6. Where should this preparation *begin*? in *what part* of the soul? Shall it begin in the* understanding? That hath 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 seat, and his feet entangled in the reins of the horses, which hurry him about: the sensitive appetite, like a wild horse, hath 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, hath 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 hath no reason itself, it submits not to the laws of reason, it hath got the mastery of it, and hath 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 any thing 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 jailors? 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

* Amiraunt, de predest. ch. 5. p. 48.

† Chamier, Panstrat., Tom. 3. lib. 4. cap. 1. Thes. 12.

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 hath 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. 15. 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.

First, 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 graci-

ous habit? What ability have we to any 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 reasoning 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; *When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, Rom. 1. 21.* 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 *διαλογισμοί*, 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 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. 5. 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 1. 5. Though the light of the sun did shine a thousand times brighter than it does, and strike upon the face and eye-lids of man with the greatest glory, yet if there be a spot upon the apple of his eye, if he wants a seeing faculty, he can apprehend nothing of it. Hence the apostle prays for the illumination of the understanding of the Ephesians, *Eph.* 1. 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 by God*, John 6. 45; by an internal teaching of the Spirit, as well as by himself in an oral instruction. What a thick cloud was upon Nicodemus's 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 any thing arising from it: *Flesh and blood* (saith our Saviour to Peter,) *hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is heaven*, Matt. 16. 17. Flesh and blood includes every thing 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 sun-beams; *Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day*, Deut. 29. 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, we 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: 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, doted, 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 materials, 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 hath the things contained in the law*, Rom. 2. 14, 15; yet no man hath by nature the things contained in the gospel. The gospel hath not the same advantage in the hearts of men as the law hath; for it finds nothing of kin to it. Though a natural heart hath 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 hath 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 na-

tural wisdom he counts them foolishness, 1 *Cor.* 2. 14. Hence not many wise are renewed in their minds.

Had 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 communicated to his posterity the notion of a Redeemer, which soon died 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.* 8. 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 hath 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 hath believed our report ?* hath been the voice of God's messengers in all ages, *Isa.* 53. 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 incapacitates 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 order, 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 hath *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 hath no knowledge of? And without knowledge it cannot commend it to the will. The apostle asserts a plain *cannot* in this business. *He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. 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 moon-light, 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. *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears, Isa. 43. 8.* 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. 12. 3*; 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?

As we cannot understand it, so, secondly, *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 breath-

ed 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 suppliants, 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 hath no conceptions of the excellency of the human nature above his own. No nature can ever affect that which is contrary to it; no 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, *Phil. 2. 13.* The frame of man's will and desire, stands to another point. *The lusts of your father you will do, John. 8. 44.* The best renewed man knows not *what to pray for as he ought*, without the instruction of the Spirit, *Rom. 8. 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 grows 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, Cant. 5. 4.* The church owed no obligation to her free will, and her own pre-dispositions. There is not a smoke in the heart to heaven, without a spark first from hea-

ven: 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 for it, spring not out of that stock.

PART III.

MAN CANNOT BE THE AUTHOR OF HIS REGENERATION.

If this work depended upon the will of man, it would deprive God of his sovereign independence—It would dishonour his wisdom—It would rob him of his fore-knowledge—Renders the truth of God uncertain—Despoils God of his worship—The nature and state of man in creation—In innocency—His state of corruption—The state of man under the gospel—The condition of regenerate men—Nothing can be the cause of itself—Man cannot renew himself by the help of instituted means—Nor by all his moral works.

II. **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.

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

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

1. Of his *sovereign independency*. 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 lower 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 every thing 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. 3. 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 concomitancy: 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; *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, Rom. 11. 36.*

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 independency 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. 9. 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 unblamable 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 hath 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 chuseth 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 must 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, *My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure, Isa. 46. 10.* The apostle puts these two arguments together; *Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, Eph. 1. 11.*

He argues first, 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 every thing, in an efficacious and energetical manner, as the word *ἰνεργεῖν* signifies. And then, secondly, he argues 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 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 hairbrained nature.

3. If the will of man were the prime cause of regeneration, it would deprive God of his *fore-knowledge*, and *prescience*: it would make that fore-knowledge 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 doth 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 fore-know 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 certainly, 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 doth not certainly determine the regeneration of man: and for God to foreknow that which he himself has not determined, and when nothing in the

* Ball of the Covenant, p. 341, 342.

creature, nor any thing in the circumstances determines it, is to make God see that, as one saith, which neither in the creature, nor in himself, is to be seen.

But some may object, *how* doth God come to foreknow sin, for that depends upon the liberty of the will?

I answer, it would be too long to enquire 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 doth foretell. *Christ began to tell them how many things he was to suffer of the chief priests and scribes, Mat. 16. 21.* 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 here foretells, 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 occurrence 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 hath 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. 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 prevalency 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. 53. 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 hap-hazard, and a may-be, 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 expence ; 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 soul, 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.

It would also make the truth of God uncertain in *the promises he makes to men*. How could God promise that so absolutely as he does, *A new heart will I give you, Ezek. 36. 26* ; 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, *Not for your sakes do I*

do this : be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel, ver. 32. 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 free will assisted him!

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

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 hath 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 hath? Who desires an alms that hath thousands in his purse? As prayer would be a vain thing in any man that should deny a providence over-ruling the affairs 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 heart, and a new spirit, is to be enquired after to do it for us, *Ezek. 36. 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. 5. 21; Cant. 1. 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 hath 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. 5. 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 any man, as he did to Moses, *Why criest thou unto me ? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forwards*, *Exod. 14. 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.

It would rob him of his *praise* also ; of his 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 regenerate 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 hath made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* 1 Cor. 4. 7; though it may be meant of a difference of gifts, yet it is *argumentum minoria*, 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 doth 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 doth in hell.

The apostle wishes the Philippians *to work out their salvation with fear and trembling*; and encourageth them by this argument, because God is the author of all that good which they do*. If the determination

* Amirauc. Serm. in Phil, 2. 11. 13.

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 saith, 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 hath 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 didst also give as much grace to my neighbour: but I added something to that which thou didst 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 thy grace, than he that believes not: for, Lord, thou didst 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,

* Bannez, in 2da 2dæ Qu. 10. p. 48:

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. 1. 31; since there would be a foundation for flesh to glory in his presence, contrary to the design of God in his works, which is, *That no flesh should glory in his presence*, ver. 29.

The second sort of argument 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 any thing 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, no, 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 omnipotency, 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 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 himself, 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. 7. 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 hath already, and act naturally from it.

2. In the state of *innocency*. Let us consider man in that, and it will appear he is unable to renew himself. If a 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 then 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 persevere, 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 him? 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 innocency; 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 passed from

* Psal. 59, 5. Heb. All Adam is all vanity, נָפֶלֶת settled or standing.

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 irresolved between two parts, when the guide of it is so easily 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 fulness 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 understanding, 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?

3. Consider man also in the state of *corruption*.

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. 6. 5.* 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 corruptedly, 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

* Amirant. Serm. de Epi, Evangel. p. 211.

be wicked, it cannot do any thing 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 of 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. 8. 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, *Matt. 7. 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

* Polhill of the Decrees, p. 373, 374.

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, 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 *ingrafted into the good olive-tree, is contrary to nature, Rom. 11. 24.* Nature cannot naturally contribute to that what 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.

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

The power of man is weak 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 beholden 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 quæ 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 whoever 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 11. 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 efficacy 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?

The power of man is weak 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 reluctancy of reason, whose will is led not by reason, but appetite, and chuse not like men, but beasts, under the notion of pleasant and tasteful? Is not this from the will conducted by appetite? The temperance and continence opposite to this, is not

* Ducat. de imagin. Dei, lib. 2. cap. 3. p. 26.

in scripture counted part of the extraction of nature, but the gift of God. *But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that,* 1 Cor. 7. 7, 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. 2. 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 bean 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 doth 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 any thing assume an higher nature than what it originally hath? Man hath assumed a lower nature than that wherein he was created; which no creature besides him, in this lower world, hath. Since he hath brutified himself, and cannot moralize 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?

In this corrupt state, *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*, saith our Saviour, *for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God?* *Mark 10. 24, 25.* This one corruption com-

manding 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 pronounceth of another sin, that of ambition, *How can ye believe which receive honour one of another ?* John 5. 44.

That one fancy of the Jews, of a temporal conquering Messiah, did so possess their minds, 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, hath 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.

The third argument is derived from the state of a man *under the gospel*.

1. If regeneration depended on the will of man, what is *the reason that 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. 1. 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. 1. 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, conducts 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 so 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.

Even 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 hath 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 describing 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 hath heard the same arguments inculcated many a time? Many drops would not work it before, and one drop works it now 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 hath 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, *Matt.* 11. 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 an hyperbolical manner of expression; as we do when we reproach a man for unmercifulness, we say, had I intreated a Turk or Barbarian as much, I should have bended 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

* *Amirant. Ser. de Evang. Serm. 6. p. 286.*

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; *Create in me a clean heart: renew in me a right spirit, Psal. 51. 10.* 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; he 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 any thing 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 prevalency 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, saith 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 hears of an alms to be distributed at such a place, and he knows he stands in need of it, and hath 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 doth 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.

The fourth 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 hath 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 controul it, and lust against it ? Regenerate men *cannot do the good they would*, and they *do the evil which they hate*, Rom. 7. 15. 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 hath no will to the one, nor hatred of the other, who hath 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 hath a relish of God and the goodness of the law, who hath sin in part mortified, and cast out of the mind, to the members and suburbs; how much greater must the inability and resistance be, where 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. 7. 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 hath 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.*

Argument the fifth, 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

* Gurnal, part. 1. p. 21.

what it has by nature. No effect is nobler than its cause; grace is more noble than nature: a seal cannot convey any other image than what is stamped upon itself, and no further than its own dimensions; neither can nature stamp any thing of grace upon the soul, because it hath no such image engraven on it by God. Nature, though never so perfect in its own kind, can never produce a thing of higher perfection 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, *I am nothing*, 2 Cor. 12. 11, and intitles grace the sole benefactor of all his spiritual good, 2 Cor. 15. 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 wills. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son*, Rom. 8. 29. 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 re-

ceived 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 manages 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 principle 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 planted roots in it. All the spectacles in the world cannot cure a man's eyes, he must have a visive 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.* 53. 1, because all those things do not work in a physical way, as medicines which attain their end without any active concurrence of the patient; but in a moral way, the will therefore and nature must first be changed 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 de-

monstrations 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; *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not, John 12. 37.* 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 11. 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 will 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, *2 Kings 18. 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 shewed 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; *If one went to them from the dead, they will repent, Luke 16. 30.* But this opinion was contradicted by Abraham, ver. 51, 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 characters of omnipotency 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 change.*

The *law* cannot * 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 doth not tame it; though it shews 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, *yet enemies, yet sinners. Rom. 5, 6, 7,* 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

* Judicat. & damnat peccatum in natura hominis, non tollit. Melancton.

was diminished. *The law was given, that sin might abound; Rom. 5. 20*; 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. 7, 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, *ωαδήματα*, 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 hoiness upon it, *Rom. 7. 12, 13, 14*; there was also equity and conveniency 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, *We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin*; ver. 14. 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.

The *gospel* cannot effect this change of heart. Though the veil of ceremonies be taken off from it, and it appeareth open faced, yet till the veil be taken off the understandings of men, it will produce little fruit among them, 2 *Cor.* 3. 14. The gospel is plain, but only *to him that understands*, *Prov.* 8. 9: as the sun is clear, but only to him that hath 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* 12. 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. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true*: 1 *John* 5. 20. 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

* Cocceius, de Fædere, c. 15, pag. 472, 473.

heavenly gift, the *Son given to us*, *Isa.* 9. 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 patheticall 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 pur-*

pose and grace, 2 Tim. 1. 9. Paul, before his conversion, was *blameless as to the righteousness of the law, Phil. 3. 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, *When we were dead in sins, Eph. 2. 5*; 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. 2. 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. 36. 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, *If it be of grace, it is not of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: Rom. 11. 6.* And faith is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, *Ephes. 2. 9.* And the apostle opposeth the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, to *works of righteousness*, *Titus 3. 5.* 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?

PART IV.

MAN DOES NOT CO-OPERATE IN HIS REGENERATION.

His co-operation with God excluded by the state in which he is at first renewed—Regeneration a new principle—The consequences of supposing man's co-operation with God—Instead of promoting man hinders the work of regeneration—Cannot actuate grace received—Cannot preserve grace—The liberty of the will—What it is—That there is some liberty in men.

III. **AS** man cannot prepare himself to this work, nor produce it, so *he cannot co-operate 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, as 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 hath 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.* 4. 2, the *rain* that moistens our hearts, *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, Psal.* 72. 6. What co-operation is there in the earth with the sun, to the production of flowers, but by the softness it hath 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; *For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and*

* Pemble, p. 31.

envy, hateful, and hating one another, Tit. 3. 3. And 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, Ephes. 2. 2, 3. 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 Tit. 3. 3, *We ourselves*, 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 hath 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* supposeth *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, *He that is begotten of God keeps himself*, 1 John 5. 18. 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; *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God works in you both to will and to do*, Phil. 2. 12. 13, &c. The apostle supposes not any operation in them before, because he supposeth 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 shutters 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 him; it is said, *The Lord opened Lydia's heart*, Acts 16. 14.

The will cannot concur in the actual infusion of a gracious principle, because it hath no spark in itself by nature, suitable to that principle which is bringing in, into the soul. 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, *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, 2 Cor. 4. 6.* 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 challengeth 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 almightiness; and in some sort, be co-equal with

him, and a joint partner with God, in a work which required almightiness 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. God first *gives repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26.* A slave, whose hands and feet are loaded 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 case? 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; *Not unto us, O Lord, not to us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Not unto us, twice repeated, but to thy name give glory, Psal. 115. 1.* 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 doth 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 man 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, *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not, Rom. 7. 18.* 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 damps 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.

IV. 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, *Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name, Psal. 8. 18. Psal. 119. 26, 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 11. 1, 3.* They cannot move, unless led by the Spirit. The child hath 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 hath 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, *God gave them the Holy Ghost, as he did to us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith, Acts 15. 8, 9.* Yet the will of man concurs in this actuating of faith, as a subordinate cause. *A man is said to purify himself by hope, 1 John 3. 3.* A well rigged soul, with its habit of grace spread, as well as a ship with its sails, must wait the pleasure of the wind, before it move.

Paul acknowledges its acting for the service of God, to be not from himself principally. *Yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me, 1 Cor. 15. 10.* It was the grace of God used me as an instrument: the glory must not be ascribed to my power. 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 works the after-will, and the after-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 hath 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 us, and we will run after thee, Cant. 1. 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.

V. Man cannot by the power of his own will *preserve* grace in himself. Our Saviour's prayer to his Father, *John 17. 11, 15,* to *keep them,* imports that they were too weak to keep themselves. *Unless the Lord keep the city, in vain doth the watchman wake, Psal. 127. 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. Psal. 104. 29,* much more the new creature, whose strength doth 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 in-dwelling 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. *That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, 2 Tim. 1. 14,* not by thine own strength. If 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 likely to be preserved in us without God's keeping; *Keep this in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, 1 Chron. 29. 18:* 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 hath not a spark of in his own nature, but an enmity to.

But I am asked, do you divest man of all *power*, all *freedom* of will? is he able to do *nothing* in order to regeneration?

I reply, *we do not* divest man of all power; therefore before we consider what power belongs to man, we may consider him,

1. *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 any thing morally good. Nothing

* Senault. *Christian Man*, p. 203.

was due to Adam but the state of the devils, who have no affection to any thing 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 sometimes 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*; *Thou shalt surely die*, *Gen. 2. 17*; a death of all morality, all affections to any thing that hath 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 recompence. None of these things can be looked for in Adam, or any of his posterity, as fallen; not a grain of life, or any thing 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 any thing 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. 2. 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 a man a burning and sparkling, *John 1. 9*,

and upholds all thing by his mediatory, as well as divine power, *Heb. 1. 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 hath, is originally from this cause, and grows not up from the stock of nature, but from common grace.

Which common grace is more *general to all men*. Whereby those divine sparks in their understandings, and whatsoever is morally praise-worthy in them, is kept up by the grace of God, which was the cause that Christ *tasted death for every man*, *Heb. 2. 9.*; 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.

Or this grace is more particular common 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 hath 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 the 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 hath, first, 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 hath good intentions. *Whereas the devil doth 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, and some power 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 doth extend.

First, What *kind* of liberty this is.

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 not a will, which liberty doth 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

* Dr. Jackson, vol. 2. fol. p. 3091.

it embraceth 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 every thing as good, either an honest, pleasant, or profitable good.

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 chuse that which was really good, yet had a mutability, and could chuse evil; and by chusing 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 hath 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 hath conquered him, imposeth upon him; *They themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage,* 2 Pet. 2. 19.

And of all men in a state of nature, though under common grace, the apostle pronounceth, *That there is none that seek after God,* Rom. 3. 11; 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,

* Ames Medul. lib. 1. cap. 13. Thes. 10.

nothing can be done well ; hence man is said to be dead ; not that the life which constitutes the nature of the soul is taken away ; but that which renders it fit for performing actions pleasing to God ; for such a life consists 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, ceases not to be a body, but ceaseth 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, *Psal. 88. 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.

3. Therefore though man hath 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 sins upon the choice of man; *They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abomination, Isa. 66. 3, 4.* They were 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. When sin ariseth 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 any thing 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;

* Smith, Select Discourse, p. 290, &c.

“ 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 a man were divested of all kind of liberty, he might have some excuse for himself; but since the scripture pronounces men *without excuse*, *Rom. 1. 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 condemns 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; *For because of these things*, *Ephes. 5. 6*; that is, for those gross sins which they might have avoided, *comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*, ver. 5. ἀπειθίας; 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 alledged as the principal reasons of the last sentence. And our Saviour in his last judgment, does not charge men with their unregenerateness, but with their omissions of what they might have done, and that easily; and commissions which they might have avoided; with their not feeding his members when they were hungry, &c. *Matt 25. 41, 42, 43*, which were things as much in their power, as any thing in the world. And the reason Christ renders of the sentence passed upon men, to depart from him, was their working of iniquity; *Depart from me, you that work iniquity*, *Matt. 7. 23*; that work it voluntarily, and work that you might have forbore. Though unregeneracy excludes 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 hath no will to turn; yea, he hath no will to do those things which he might do.

Supposing man hath 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, and will not use his power against them, 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 doth 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 doth impute that for a vice, or a virtue, to which a man is carried by constraint, without any power to avoid. Where any thing 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 hath only a spontaneous power of motion without reason. Sin could not be charged upon man, as God doth all along, *It is a people that do err in their hearts, Psal. 95. 10. And thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments, Psal. 119. 21.* 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 hath 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 an 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 err, is because they do not take right ways of judging according to those means they have: *Ye err, saith our Saviour, not knowing the scripture, nor the power of God, Matt. 22. 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.* 1. 19. 20, 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 one saith; 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.

* Ingelo, Bentivol. part. 2. p. 99.

PART V.

HOW FAR THE POWER OF MAN EXTENDS.

*Man has power by common grace to avoid many sins—
Has power to do many more good actions than he
does—To attend upon outward means—To exercise
consideration—Can reflect upon himself—Upon the
word of God—Can cherish inward motions—Can
consider the notions he has by natural light.*

I NOW go on to shew, Thirdly, how *far* does the power of man by common grace extend.

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, hath a power of doing that which is spiritually good; so a natural man by common grace hath 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 course.

Proposition 1. Man hath 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, *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, Rom. 7. 24, 26. Wherefore, 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 hath the liberty of walking where he pleases in a prison, he may chuse 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.

If it be said, If a man hath power to avoid this or that sin, *why may he not avoid all?*

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 of reason, and pressing considerations against it: But

* Fitz Herbert Policy and Religion, part 2. chap. 16. Sect. 13.

the power to shun all sin, depends upon the subordination of the faculties one to another, 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 hath 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 Satan 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 chuse whether he will assault this man, or that, with such a temptation; 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 chuse 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 by 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

* Soto Council of Trent, Book 2. p. 197.

upon a man to run into this or that infectious company, or drink brim-full 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, is it 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 willingly, though a strong temptation may be the first motive of it: it is said, *Ephraim willingly walked after the commandment, Hos. 5. 11*, though the first motive to it was the command of their prince Jeroboam.

To evidence this, let me propose 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 hath swallowed up all sentiments of a Deity? Do you not rather wish for opportunities, and court a temptation? Do you not put your heads out of the window, with Sisera's mother, and ask, why is the chariot of Satan so long a coming? It is said, *The soul of the wicked desires evil, Prov. 21. 10.*

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 mem-

bers? 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. 6. 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 controul 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 not acting, which is far more easy than a positive acting; and every man has 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. *Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Acts 5. 3.* His meaning is not, why Satan has done it; for Ananias could not render a reason of that; but why didst thou suffer Satan to fill thy heart? If you have given

a check 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 hath 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 we 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. 4. 14. Surely we have a power by common grace, to forbear any conference with the motions of flesh and blood.

When you did 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 hath 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 proposes? 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; *The fool rageth, and is confident, Prov. 14. 16.*) and would not consider any of the ways of God it reminded you of, *Job. 34. 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 chuse 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: doth 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. 20. 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 glitter 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.

* Fitz Herbert of Policy and Religion, part 2. chap. 30. Sect. 22.

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 cognizance 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 hath 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 has universal consent, hath 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 death bed, are not so racked by their consciences simply for not being regenerate, as for not avoiding those sins which were hinderances, 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.

2d Proposition. 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 saith, *Without me you can do nothing*, John 15. 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 hath rifled; which counsel Daniel gives to Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan. 4. 27.* Though a sick man cannot do all the acts of a sound man till he be perfectly cured; yet he hath 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. 2. 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: *I know that thou didst this in the integrity*

of thy heart: for I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her, Gen. 20. 6. וְלוֹמַתִּיר, I gave thee not up to touch her.

If men nourished 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 doth; and for not keeping that, he is condemned*.

3d Proposition. Men have a power to attend upon *the outward means* God hath appointed for regeneration. Though man cannot renew himself, yet he hath a natural power to attend upon the means God hath afforded. Though a man hath not power to cure his own disease or heal his wound, yet he hath power to advise with others, and use the best medicines for his recovery. There is not an outward duty a renewed man doth, but a natural man hath 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 cannot you make hell the object of your fears, and heaven the object of your desire? Why might not Esau have wept for

* Preston, vol. 3. p. 39.

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 brings against Ephraim, was, that *he would not frame his doings to turn towards God, Hos. 5. 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. The first is *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? Hath 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 6. 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 doth 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.

The other means I mentioned is *prayer*. I do not mean a spiritual prayer, which is by the special assistance and in-dwelling 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 8. 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 that 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 hath 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 hath given us a power of begging, if 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 no where else for it, but from his hand; and that you will not be at rest till he hath put in his hand, and dropped upon your hearts? Can you not thus cry out, O that I were a renewed person! As well as cry out, O 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?

4th Proposition. Man hath a power to *exercise consideration*. He hath seminals of *Jus and Æquum*, and a power of judging according to them; *Yea, why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?* Luke 12. 57. 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; *It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house,* Ezek. 12. 3.

1. Can you not reflect upon *yourselves*? Every man hath 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 9. 40. Can you not then take a

survey of your past lives ; and 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 hath 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 reason 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 a 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? *When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes. Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself!* 1 Kings 21. 27, 29. 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. 6. 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 lust? 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 hath 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 begun well, *who did hinder you from a further obedience?* *This persuasion comes not of him that calls you,* Gal. 5. 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 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 consciences have not laboured with 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 by natural light*? Man hath 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 commanding 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. 2. 15*; and this in man's corrupt state. Cannot men then observe the dictates of conscience? Can he not find out the sense of this law in his mind, though it may 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.* 1. 18, and like the scorner, *hear not its rebukes?* *Prov.* 13. 1. Whatsoever man hath 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.

PART VI.

DIFFICULTIES SOLVED.

How the inability of man accords with the commands and promises of God—God may command—Man once had power to obey—God did not deprive him of that power—Lost it himself—The right of commanding remains firm—What God demands—Not bound to give grace to any—This does not affect his sincerity—His wisdom—His justice—The design of his commanding—To make man sensible of his impotence—To shew the need of his grace—To clear his justice—To bring men to himself—Reasons why the impotence of man will not excuse him.

THERE are many who ask, 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.

To this I answer in general. God *may* command, and his command *does not signify a present ability in man*. 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.

Again, 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 putrifying Lazarus; *Lazarus, arise, come forth, John 11. 43*, implied a power in Lazarus to raise himself; or his speech to the palsy 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 acknowledges 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 hath not a present moral ability to renew himself. For,

1. 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 not 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 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; *I was*

naked, Gen. 3. 10. 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. 2. 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 fore-knowledge that the sun will rise to morrow morning, is a cause of the 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 his original per-

* Trigland de grat. p. 275.

fection, and followed after his *own inventions*, *Eccles.* 7. 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 God-head. 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.* 3. 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 hath 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 hath 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 hath changed his state?

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 hath, 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 innocency*. It is but *obedientia redintegrata*, a return in part to that perfect holiness which was inherent in man, and to that obedience in part, which was in a greater 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. 1. 6.* Had he not a fundamental power to grieve, though since sin was extraneous to a state of innocency, 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 3. 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 hath 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 veins 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, Prov. 6. 10*, saith a man, that thinks he can rise time enough when he will, and dispatch his business in a moment.

With what face can man accuse God of not giving him power, when he thinks he hath 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, *All the words which the Lord hath said, we will do, Exod. 24. 3*; 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, is an act of *his sovereign pleasure*. If God hath 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 hath 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 14. 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; *To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*, Matt. 13. 11. 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 commands them to turn, and promises 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-

* Amiran. Ser. Sur. 2. Phil. 13. p. 79.

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. Doth 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 resolve 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 hath 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 intrench 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 hath 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

* Amirauc. Ser. Sur. 2. Phil. 13. p. 363.

our nature, and respect not our reason as good or bad, but simply as reason : these commands pre-suppose in us a faculty of understanding and will, and a suitability between the command and the faculty of a reasonable creature. This is the reason why God hath 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. 13*, 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 ; O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean ? when shall it once be ?* ver. 27. 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 promises 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 as he pleases 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 commands, when he knows that man hath no power to renew himself.

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, as to desire *not to hear the voice of the Lord*, Deut. 18. 16, 17, 18, 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. *They have well spoken that which they have spoken*, ver. 17. 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

* Mornæ de Religio. Christian. cap. 31. p. 360, 361.

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 was to keep under it; but without a sense of his own weakness, man would never come near to God. God commands us, not that he expects we should renew ourselves, for he knows we cannot; but that being acquainted with our own 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, *Ye shall keep my statutes and do them*: whereupon it immediately follows, *I am the Lord which sanctify you. Lev. 20. 8.* 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. 3. 23, 24.* God makes us amends, that as he requires of us what we lost by another's fault, he hath 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 acknowledgments 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. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us, Isa. 26. 12.*

The promise therefore of a new heart, and a new spirit, is made indefinitely, none are named 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 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. *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, Ezek. 36. 37.* 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 innocency; 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, *Matt. 11. 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 wilfully cherishes 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. 1. 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 favour 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

* Cartwright, Harmo. in John 6. 43.

† Amirauc, Ser. Sur. 2. Phil. p. 90, &c.

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 hath 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

* Goulart, de Providence, p. 172, 173, 174.

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 shew them where their chief strength lies; this appears plainly to be the intent of the Spirit of God in that command and promise, *Work out your own salvation. For it is God that works in you to will and to do, Phil. 2. 12, 13.* 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 latter 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 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 innocency 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 any thing but that which God doth command; their wills can will any thing but that which God proposes. 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 affords men beams of light ; he makes clear discoveries, as it is, *He hath showed it to them ; it is manifest in them, Rom. 1. 19.** 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 ; *The forbearance, long-suffering, and goodness of God, leads to repentance, Rom. 2. 4.* The object is intelligible ; the *word is near us, in our mouths, in our hearts* : it is apprehensible in itself, *Rom. 10. 6, 7.* The revelation is as plain as the surface of the heavens, *Psal. 19. 1, 2, 3,* applied to the preaching of the gospel, *Rom. 10. 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 hath fastened in himself, *Rom. 8, 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

* ἐφανερώσε.

motion to it, and embraces of it? The insufficiency does 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 doth 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, *meræ 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 hath 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 impotence 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, 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, that God is bound to restore to him that will to obey had 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

* Trigland de gratia, p. 303.

† Trigland de gratia, p. 303.

believe and repent? And here the scripture lays it upon the hardness of the heart, *Rom. 2. 5*, and a rebellious walking after our own thoughts. *I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts, Isa. 65. 2.* We are impotent and cannot, because we are rebellious and will not. For since man hath 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 doth 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. *My anger is kindled against them; how long will it be ere they attain to innocence? Hosea 8. 5, יבלו; 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 suppli-

* Quando vitium consuetudine & progressu corroboratum velut naturaliter inolevit, a voluntate sumpsit exordium, Aug. Civ. Dei. lib. 12. cap. 3.

cations, 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, *Matt.* 7. 11. They were not only his disciples that he preached that sermon to, but the multitude, comparing it with *Matt.* 5. 1, and *Matt.* 7. 28. Hath not God declared, that *he delights not in the death of a sinner*, *Ezek.* 33. 11, and doth 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* 10. 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 hath 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. *Thou wicked and slothful servant, Matt. 25. 26*; God has not promised to furnish you with more talents, when you improve not the talents you have already; non-improvement of them cuts off 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 used his greatest industry in trading with the talents God intrusted 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 enquire of God to do it for you? God never fails them that diligently seek him.

PART VII.

THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF REGENERATION IMPROVED.

The misery of man by the fall—The vast power of sin—The evils of pride—How regeneration is wrought—How to judge of the truth of doctrines—We should ascribe nothing to ourselves—Nothing to instruments—Necessity of humility—Of renouncing our own strength—Of dependence upon God—Address to the unregenerate.

LET us now look to the use of this doctrine,

I. 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 innocency 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 compound 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 putrified carcase, 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 in its fallen state, 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 woful 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.* 7. 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 hath

* Trigland, de grat. p. 308.

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 doth in a body, or disjuncting a member doth weakness in a man : otherwise man, after he had sinned, had been sound 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 hath 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 phrenzy, 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 5. 7*. It is the 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, *O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? Matt. 12. 34*. 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 6. 43, 44, 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 any thing 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. 7. 9.* But when he takes out the lesson of the sinfulness of natural concupiscence, *Rom. 7. 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. 7.*

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. 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 hath said, will we do, Exod. 24. 3;* and *all that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient, ver. 7.* 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 mutual wills, as if they had as much power as the first man in innocence; this vain confidence hath 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, *All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient, ver. 7.*

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 8. 36.* It is the very moth of pride which eat 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 murderer; and aspiring to an independency on God, fell down into the dungeon of slavery to, and dependency upon Satan. It is a pride like that of Adam's; 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 God's 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 this 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 a 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 establish a righteousness of our own, we shall 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 fulness, if we stood in no need it: and what need had we of it, if we could dispatch 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 treasures of grace; and therefore are afraid to attend upon evangelical means, for fear they should be put upon serious reflection 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 affec-

tion, 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. 28. 26* ; it is to trust in a weathercock, that is mutable with every wind of temptation.

To depend upon our will, 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 : 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 imaginations, and cry out, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, Jer. 31. 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 ; *The Son quickens whom he will, John 5. 21* ; 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 these 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. 2. 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. 53. 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, *spake as he spake*: But though his *lips were full of grace*, Psa. 35. 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 affection; and the Jews harder under God's wrathful blows, Isa. 1. 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.* 1. 19, 20. The working of mighty power is a title too high for the capacity of mere moral exhortations. A mere suasion doth not confer a strength, but suppose it in a man, for he is only persuaded to use the power which he has already.

3. Doth 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 any thing 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 cut 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 suasory 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 adver-

saries, 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 instrument of our destruction, 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 ever likely to come into 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 hath 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 greatest sharer in the work; for the 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

* Parkens, Thes. Amcs. contra Greviuc.

only made the revelation, and was afterwards a spectator, not an actor.

5th Information: We may draw a conclusion hence, whereby to judge of *the truth of doctrines*. Man cannot renew himself. Whatsoever doctrine depresses and humbles man, and advances 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 foundation, 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. 1. 29.* The doctrine of justification by works, is thrown down by the apostle with this very argument, as a thunder-bolt; *Where is boasting then? it is excluded by faith, Rom. 3. 27*; 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 thrusts 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 7. 18.* By the same reason also in things and doctrines; and indeed, Christ speaks it in relation to his doctrine, as appears, ver. 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 commission with God, and make them co-heirs in the glory which is only due to the only wise and almighty Creator.

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

First. 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 shall blow upon it*; yea, the people, those that are God's peculiar ones, by reason of privileges are grass, *Isa.* 40. 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 Pet.* 5. 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*, *Psal.* 36. 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 omnipotency 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* 18. 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 dependance on God in a way of common providence; much more unable is it to move without a dependance 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, review yourselves, consider what you were *before* regeneration, what *after* it; and then how can you ascribe any thing 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 wickedest 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? the 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 alway flying up to God, and hovering about him? Are you alway 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 own 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.* 26. 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,

He that ascribes it to his own will, hath *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. 1. 15*, and to an abundant grace in Christ, *1 Tim. 1. 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 admirations of it; *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again*, *1 Pet. 1. 3*. And it is that the church in the times of the gospel prophesied of, *It is he that hath 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*, *Psal. 100. 3*. Whenever the naughtiness of their hearts hath 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. 15. 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. 2. 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.

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 re-

newed, 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 hath breathed upon your souls to renew you, he will blow upon your grass *to consume it*, *Isa.* 40. 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 chissel forms the stone into a statue, but according to the skill and strength of the artificer 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.

Secondly. Let us be *humbled* under our own natural importance and inability, and keep up this humiliation. There is danger of the Pharisees' 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 fulness. 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; O, let this text be writ in our hearts, *not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.*

Thirdly. Resolve nothing in *your own strength.* The power to believe and be renewed, is a power given, not inbred, *Phil.* 1. 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 upset us, without the special grace of God to establish and strengthen us.

As we are not to do any thing for our own glory, so we are not to do any thing 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 which strengtheneth me, Phil. 4. 13* ; all things by him, nothing by himself. When the Israelites went out with God, no sons of Anak, no walls of Jericho, no 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 fulness 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.

Fourthly. 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 fulness 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*, *Hos. 14. 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. 2. 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 elings 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, becomes 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, breast-plate; yet prayer and supplication must be added as a mark of our necessary dependance; *Praying always with all prayer and supplication, Eph. 6. 18*; 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.

The second branch of the exhortation, to those who are 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 evil 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 school-master* to drive to Christ, *Gal. 3. 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*, *Psal. 25. 9*, those that are sensible of their own insufficiency to guide themselves.

2. *Make use of the power you have*. Man as hath been shown, hath some power by those restored relics of nature; there is no plea therefore to lie slumbering

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 rouses up some on the sudden, before any 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 hath nothing; ; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat, Prov. 13. 4.* The sluggard hath nothing but lazy wishes, not active endeavours. If it be not worth the having, why do you desire it? 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, increases 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 3. 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? *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word, Acts 10. 44.* If you will not harden your hearts to-day, God may soften your hearts to-day, *To-day if you will hear his voice, Heb. 3. 15*; 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 hath appointed the channels of his ordinances through which to convey it. *Ministers by whom you believed, 1 Cor. 3. 5.* The gospel begets instrumentally; God principally, *1 Cor. 4. 15*; *God calls by the gospel, 2 Thes. 2. 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 any thing 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. 1. 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. 24. 13*; *because I have purged thee*, that is, offered thee means whereby thou mightest have been purged, *and thou wast 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. 6. 4.*

1. Use the means *fercently*. With as much ardour as you set upon any thing of worldly concern : do it with all your might, since the eternal blessedness of your soul depends upon it ; *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, Eccles. 9. 10 ;* stir up your souls to hear and meditate, as David does to bless ; *Bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name, Psa. 103. 1, 2.* Employ all your faculties in this useful work ; bring your hearts as near to the word as you can, wind up your affections to what you meditate upon, check your hearts when they begin to rove. Consider your own particular case in any thing 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 doth influence them. The means do not work naturally, as a plaister 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 doth 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 ; *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee, Exod. 20. 24.* 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.

2. Pray *earnestly*. Intreat God to send his grace; beg of him to issue out a divine force, and a quickening power, to enlighten your minds, and 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 apply for the healing remedy? 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 fulness of arguments in the word? Why do you not then use those arguments God hath 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 unscare; 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; *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you, James 4. 8*; 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 hath 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; *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled, Matt. 5. 6*; a fulness 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. 9. 13.*

3. 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 drawings in your consciences? Is there not something within you spurs you on? Kick not against it, nor resist it, nor smother any spark of an honest desire in your hearts; be constant observers of lessons, your natural consciences, or whatever any other principle sets 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 even the most wicked man under the gospel, but hath sometimes more bright irradiations in his conscience than at other times, but they are damped by a noisome sensuality: he hath 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 alway 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 bearing 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 ad-

mission 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 hath condemned any that conscientiously used the means of salvation. Therefore I say again, if any man uses the means, prays earnestly for this grace, observes the motions of the Spirit in him; he will not want a superadded grace from an infinitely good, tender, and merciful God.

END OF VOL. IV.



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