

**DISCOURSES ON GOD'S SALVATION OF  
SINNERS**

BY  
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VOL 1

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## A Discourse On The Necessity of Regeneration

*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.—John iii. 3,5*

These 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 Nicodemus his compliment, who came to him with some veneration of him. His description is in ver. 1: 'There was a man of the pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' 1. By his profession or sect, a pharisee. 2. His name, Nicodemus. 3. His quality, a ruler of the Jews; "Argoon", a prince, one of the great Sanhedrin, who had the supreme power in all affairs which concerned 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; therefore is to be commended. He comes by night; has some failure in his respect to Christ, afraid publicly to own him. Nicodemus was one of the member which believed Christ for his miracles, John ii. 28. He comes hereupon to discourse with him about divine things. He acknowledges him a prophet sent by God. The reason of his acknowledgement 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 by God.

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 flat 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 in the primitive times, 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 of providence; and they had miracles afterward in a more scanty measure, now and then. 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 has been in all ages, and is still, a miracle kept up in the world, greater than 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: Luke vii. 22, '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.' Christ had cured many in their sight; but he added in the end of the enumeration, 'To the poor the gospel is preached,' "Ptochoi euangelidzontai". The poor are evangelised, 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 Sanhedrin. Yet he comes, though by night.

Observe,

1. It is a hard matter for us to perform a duty we are convinced of, without a flaw in it. Nicodemus is convinced by the miracles of Christ's divine authority; but he forbears an open acknowledgement 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 confesses 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 makes him choose the darkness. This greatest piece of 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 hindrance 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 himself to him. He was ashamed to be taken notice of in this little address he made: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which comes from God only?'

4. Men may have a high esteem of Christ, 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, Deut. xviii. 15. He confesses him a prophet, but not the Messiah. Look to your estimations of Christ; see whether they be supreme, superlative, the Saviour, the mediator, the Lord and King.

5. Convictions may be a long time before 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, verse 4 and 9, to be rather a malcontent, than a convert; yet the seed then sown by our Saviour's discourse sprung up at last in fruit. He does upon a signal occasion plead Christ's cause before a council of pharisees, probably the great Sanhedrin, yet but faintly: John vii. 50, 51, 'Doth our law judge any

man before it hears him, and knows what he does?' 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 Saviours crucified body: John xix. 39, '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.' What grace he had seems to be in a long sleep, but is very vigorous upon its awaking.

6. True grace does one time or other discover itself most contrary to that which was the natural crime before. In both these places, fear had been his sin. It is now overmatched by confidence. The Holy Ghost takes notice of it, 'which at the first came to Jesus by night.' 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 xix. 38, 'Being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,'—own him publicly at his death, when those that had been familiar with him in his life forsook him. Christ will make timorous hares to own his cause, when those that think themselves courageous 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.

We have seen the pharisee. Let us consider our Saviour's answer: ver. 3, '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.'

Some think that Nicodemus asked a question which is not expressed, but may be gathered out of Christ's answer, and seems to be this, What was 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 uses his authority,

acknowledged by Nicodemus, of a teacher to inform 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 this 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 pharisee's corruption. Nicodemus came by night, out of love to his credit, that might be impaired by his coming in the daytime. 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, and out of fear of the pharisees, who thereby might be offended.

Christ's answer therefore very well suits him. You must become a new man, if you would have acquaintance with evangelical mysteries. Sway with your old notions, and pharisaic pride. Deny your honour, credit, and whatsoever partakes of the name of self. A legal frame, and a pharisaic righteousness, will not advance you to the kingdom of God. The Jews were proud of being Abraham's children, and thought the gates of heaven could not be shut against any of that relation.

John had touched them before for this: Mat. iii. 9, 'And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' Christ does tacitly here do the same, and puts him in mind of another birth, and the falseness and deceitfulness of his bottom of legal righteousness.

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. Christ therefore by his answer would lift up his thoughts higher, and puts him in mind of the kingdom of God, which the Jews in their common discourse signified the kingdom of the Messiah by, and have entitled it in ages since, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. So that Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself as the Messiah, not only as an extraordinary prophet.

These three things evidence what relation this speech of Christ

has to that of Nicodemus.

Observe from the relation of this to Nicodemus his speech:

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, confesses him to be sent of God, owns the divinity of his miracles. Christ does not compliment him again, takes no notice of his civility, but falls roundly to his work, acquaints him with the necessity of regeneration, without which he could not see the kingdom of God, for all his fine praises of him. A glowering reverential religion is insignificant with Christ. A new birth, a likeness to Christ in nature, a conformity to him, is accounted by Christ an higher estimation of him, than all external applauses given to him.

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, the seal of circumcision borne in the body, that can instate this 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 replied 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! ver. 4, 'Nicodemus says 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?' What a childish conception has he of this most heavenly doctrine! Can such an ancient man as I return to my first principles, dig a way into 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 inadvertence, as not to think of that place, Ezek. xxxvi., 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 does not comprehend him.

His carnal notion bears sway against spiritual truths.

Observe,

1. A man may have great knowledge in the letter of the Scripture, and yet not understand the necessary and saving doctrines in 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 Nicodemus his knowledge profit him, if it had been ten thousand times more, without the knowledge of this doctrine, and the experience of it!

2. Nothing is more an enemy to the saving knowledge of gospel mysteries than a priding ourselves in head knowledge. Nicodemus his 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,' Ps. xxv. 9.

3. 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 has almost thrust out spiritual. And when Christians meet, their discourses are more about unnecessary disputes than these saving mysteries of Christianity, which might produce elevations of heart to heaven.

To this exception of Nicodemus Christ makes his reply; where observe,

1. A fresh assertion of it, with an explanation: ver. 5, '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.' In the third verse, Christ lays down the necessity of the new birth; in ver. 6, 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 back it: ver. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 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. has a spiritual nature.

Flesh is taken for man corrupted: Gen. vi. 3, 'For he also is flesh,' degenerate into flesh, grown a mere sensual creature by the loss of original righteousness. For upon the parting of original righteousness, the soul of man was as a body without life; a spiritual carcass, as the body is without a soul.

Flesh signifies the whole nature, as in that place, Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee,' &c. 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, and is advanced above mere flesh, 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 Nicodemus his objection. Nicodemus understands it of a carnal birth. No, no, says 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. 6, in that expression of water, &c. Some, as the papists, understand it of the elementary water of baptism, and from this place exclude all children dying without baptism from salvation. Others understand it of a metaphorical

water, whereof Christ speaks, John iv. 14, 'The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.'

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; how, and in what sense, is not my present work.

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 baptised, if this were meant of baptism. As if these words, John vi. 53, 'Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,' 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: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believes, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be damned.' He does not say, He that is not baptised 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 does not believe shall be damned; but it is not true to say, He that is not baptised shall be damned. Christ says 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 is not tied to baptism, but he 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: Mat. xxviii. 19, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them.' And it is not likely Christ would discourse to Nicodemus of the necessity of an institution that was not yet expressly appointed by him, and which he did not appoint till after

his resurrection; for he discourses of that which was of present necessity. And if this were meant of baptism, and of that absolute necessity the papists would lay upon it from these words, then all that died before the institution of baptism by our Saviour, unbaptised, could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, though believing. Can anything 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 of an absolute necessity at that time, but that it should be so after his death. That is to give our Saviour the lie, for he spoke it of the present time, some years before his death. Besides, it wrongs the goodness of our Saviour (if he had meant it of baptism), to defer the institution of it so long after, when it was at present necessary for Nicodemus his salvation. It wrongs his wisdom, too, to speak of that to be at present necessary, which was not in being, nor could 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 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 baptising, and was always practised in the primitive times, and is to this day 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 hurried away to a stake or gibbet, or 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. It is water that is expressed and blood is not water. 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, that he that is born of the Spirit is spirit, 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 vii. 16; Ezek. xx. 46, 'Drop thy word toward the south.' Others, by water, understand the grace of regeneration as the principle, the Spirit as the cause, as Titus iii. 5, 6, 'He has saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' 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 does flow.

By water and the Spirit are signified one and the same thing, the similitude of water showing the cleansing and generating virtue of the Spirit, as fire and the Spirit are put together, Mat. iii. 11, to signify the refining quality the Spirit has (as fire has to separate the dross from the good metal). Fire and the Spirit, i. e. a spirit of fire, of the force and efficacy of fire.

This water is the same which God had promised: Isa. xlv. 8, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty;' and Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you;' and ver. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you.' He there explains water to be the Spirit: 'I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.' And in Ezekiel he joins water and the Spirit; i. e. the water of my Spirit, or my spiritual water, my gospel grace. And Isa. xii. 18, 19, God speaks of the admirable fruitfulness of this water. This shall renew you, and make you fructify 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 those 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 and nature of the former, to hinder Nicodemus from imagining that to be a natural water which was spiritual and mystical. Water and the Spirit signifies the water of the Spirit, or a spiritual water, as 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost;' that is, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

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 show the infallible necessity of it, the certainty of the proposition.

2. To urge a special attention. Men press those things in discourse which they would have retained.

It is to be believed because of its necessity; it is to be considered because of its excellency.

Born again. "Anothen" signifies properly from above; but sometimes it is taken for again. Nicodemus understands it so by his reply, of entering again into his mother's womb, 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, which 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,' Mat. iv. 17, is called by Mark, relating the same story, 'the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 16. And the gospel is called 'the gospel of the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 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. x. 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; a 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 end and issue of it. It is a translating us into the kingdom of Christ, Col. i. 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 verse 5. he cannot enter into

the kingdom of God. He cannot,

1. By reason of God's appointment.
2. In the nature of the thing itself; he has no fitness for heaven or heavenly mysteries.

See. Seeing is taken sometimes for enjoying; not a bare sight, but fruition: John iii. 36, 'He that believes not the Son shall not see life;' that is, shall not enjoy life. And Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;' they may see him in his pronouncing the sentence, but shall not see him in a way of glorious enjoyment of him.

To have a communion with Christ in a gospel state, to have an enjoyment of Christ in eternal glory, it is necessary we be stripped of the corruption of our first nature, and be clothed with another by the Spirit of God.

Observe in the verse,

1. The infallibility of the proposition: Verily, verily.
2. The necessity of regeneration: except.
3. The extension of it in regard of the subject.
  - (1.) Subjectum quod recipit: man, i. e. every man.
  - (2.) Subjectum in quo recipitur: man, i. e. the whole man, every faculty.
4. The excellency of it implied: they cannot see the kingdom of God. If he be born again, he shall enjoy the kingdom of God.

Doct. 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 a state of 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,

I. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.

II. I shall show 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.

I. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.

Prop. 1. There are but two states, one saving, the other damning; 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 fiery, some in the Spirit, Rom. viii. 8, 9; in regard of their obedience, some walk after the flesh, some after the Spirit, Rom. viii. 1; 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, Rom. viii. 5; some swinishly wallow in sin, others place the delights of their spirits upon better and higher objects.

The Scripture mentions 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. v. 8, 'You were sometimes darkness, but now are you light;' one the children of wrath, the other the 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 would 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 supposes 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 anything 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 in us 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 (Rom viii. 8, So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God), though never so well garnished (for being utterly contrary to him it cannot be approved by him), the other is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Prop. 2. It is necessary upon the account of the fall of man and the consequents of it. In Adam we died: 1 Cor. xv. 22, 'As in Adam all died,' therefore in Adam he sinned: Rom. v. 19, 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Man cannot be supposed to sin in Adam unless some covenant had intervened between God and Adam, whence there did arise 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 has 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 he

always under an obligation to have it; he would be under desires of happiness, but without it under an impossibility of attaining it.

Were there an indifference in the soul of man, were it an *abrasa tabula*, the writing of moral precepts upon it by good education would sway it to walk in the paths of virtue, as an ill education does cast it into the ways of [vice]. This is not so; for take two, let them have the same ways of education, the same precepts instilled into them, as Esau and Jacob had by their father, who were equally taught, yet how different were their lives! Esau's 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 arises a necessity of some other principle to be put into the heart to over-sway this corrupt bias. Man goes astray from the womb, as it is in Ps. lviii. 3, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born.' There must be something to rectify him, and expel this wandering humour.

By the fall of man there was contracted,

(1.) An unfitness to any thing that is good. Man is so immersed in wrong notions of things, that he cannot judge fully of what is good: Titus i. 16, 'To every good work reprobate.' The state of nature, or the old man, is described, Eph. iv. 22, to be 'corrupt, according to deceitful lusts;' deceitful, seducing us from God, drawing us into perdition, by representing evil under the notion of good, which evidences 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 show the corruption of the will by ill habits. Lust and sin is the mere composition of corrupted nature; the whole man is stuffed with polluting principles and filthy 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,' Rom. vii. 14. 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 present condition of it to give false intelligence of the hour of the day, and it cannot do otherwise till the wheels and

weights be rectified. Our end was actively to glorify God in the service of him and obedience to him; but since man is fallen into this universal decay of his faculties, 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.) 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 says, in the case of the Galatians' errors, Gal. v. 8, 'This persuasion comes not of him which calls you,' 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 "thelemata" 'of the flesh,' Eph. ii. 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' colt, Job xi. 12. No beast more wild and brutish than man in his natural birth, and like to remain in his wild and wilful nature without grace, a new birth can only put off the wildness of the first.

(3.) Not only unfitness and unwillingness, but inability to good. A strange force there is in a natural man, which hurries him, even against some touches of his will, to evil.

How early do men discover an affection to vice! How greedily do they embrace it, notwithstanding rebukes from superiors, good exhortations from friends, with the concurrence of the vote of

conscience, giving its *amen* to those dissuasions! and yet carried against those arguments, deceived by sin, slain by sin, sold under it, Rom. vii. 11, 14. This is the miserable state of every son of nature.

Do we not find that men sometime 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 invasion of any 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 committed which their own reason told them was base and sordid; so that there is something necessary, beside consideration and resolution, to the full cure of man.

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 bringing in a power of seeing again. Original sin is a privation of original righteousness, and an introduction 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 a state of innocence, the nature of it must be changed to reduce it to its original fruitfulness; so must man, since a general defilement from Adam has seized upon him, be altered before he can 'bring forth fruit to God,' Rom. vii. 4. 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 a man to answer the end of his creation, without righteousness, as for a man to act without life, or act strongly without health and strength. It is a contradiction to think a man can act righteously without righteousness, for without it he has not the being of a man; that is, man in such a capacity, for those ends for which his creation intended him.

Well, then, since there is an unfitness, unwillingness, inability in a man to answer his end, there is a necessity of 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 has no spiritual life? How can he be fit to be a son of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

Prop. 3. Hence it follows, that it is universally necessary. Necessary for all men. Our Saviour knows none without this mark. There must be a change in the soul: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' There must be the habitation of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 9, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' There must be a crucifixion, not only of the corrupt affections of the flesh, but of the flesh itself: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.'

The old nature must be killed, with all its attendants. There is no sonship to God without likeness, no relation of a child of God without a childlike nature. Let a man be of whatsoever quality in the world, never so high, never so low, of whatsoever age, of whatsoever moral endowments, 'except a man,' every man, &c.

And simply necessary. Our Saviour does 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 for any man, no other door to creep in at 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.

It 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 acts in all, and produces the same qualities in all. Let men's religion and professions be what they will (men are apt to please themselves with this and that profession and opinion, but), 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; no age, no time excludes it.

(1.) Righteousness was necessary before the fall. The new birth is but the beginning of our restoration to that state we had before the fall. Adam could not have been happy without being innocent. The holiness of God could not create an impure creature. Without it God could take no pleasure in his work.

(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: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed.' Naturally we have a mighty friendship to Satan, a friendship to his works, though not to his person. But if any man had interest in that promise, he must exchange that friendship for an enmity.

If Jesus Christ, who is principally meant by the 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 that 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 pretendedly 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 an 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 an enmity against him can be raised. 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. lxxv. 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 Peter iii. 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: 1 Cor. x. 2, 'And were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea.' 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, of not having any other gods before him, Exod. xx. 3. We cannot suppose that command only limited to a 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 wrong to God as the bowing down to a senseless image? nay, worse than the adoring of an image, since that is senseless; but our wills 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; to set ourselves no other patterns of conformity but God, which the apostle phrases a being new created after God, Eph. iv. 24.

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 to be idolatry, Col. iii. 5, that 'if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John ii. 15; he does not love God.

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-dependence, self-willedness, is denying affection and subjection to God.

By the ceremonial law more plainly. Their duty was not terminated in an external observance of the types and shadows under the law, but a 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 a necessity of regeneration.

Therefore God is said not to require the sacrifices of beasts: Ps. xl. 6, 'Sacrifice and offering thou did not desire' (that is, sacrifices of beasts), 'burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required;' 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 anything in themselves, or anything they could work, further than upon the body, but to signify unto them an inward work upon the heart. Hence they are said not to be commanded by God: Jer. vii. 22, 23, '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.' That is, God did not principally require these as the things which did terminate 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?' Amos iii. 3. Hence God speaks so often to them of the circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 16, and promises this circumcision of the heart: Deut. xxxvi. 6, 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed,' &c. And Paul expressly says, Rom. ii. 28, 29, that 'he was not a Jew;' 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 signifies 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 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 pulling the former covenant as to the essential part of it, which was a righteous nature, but mitigating it, as the Chancery nulls 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 is ceased, but transmitted to another head; which head cannot possibly fail, as our former did, who has both a perfect righteousness in himself, and has undertook for a perfect righteousness in his people, which he is able to accomplish, and to that purpose begins it here, and perfects it hereafter. To this purpose the Scripture speaks of the everlastingness of the covenant: Ps. lxxxix. 28, '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. xlii. 6, 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people.' And the end of placing David his servant over his people, is not to give way to licentiousness and unrighteousness, and maintain men in an hostile nature against God, but that they might 'walk in his judgments, and

observe his statutes,' Jer. xxvii. 24; and that everlasting covenant of peace he would make with them is in order to sanctify them, Jer. xxxvii. 26, 28, compared together. When God would make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant, it was to set his sanctuary among them, and to let the heathen know that the Lord did sanctify Israel. And the end of the covenant is to 'put his law into the inward parts,' Jer. xxxi. 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. ix. 24. This obligation our second head entered into for us, and in him we are complete, even as our head, and as the 'head of all principality and power,' Col. ii. 10, who has undertaken for our perfect righteousness; of our persons, by his own righteousness; of our nature, by inherent righteousness, as it follows, ver 11, &c., 'in whom you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,' &c. This obligation still remains upon our head, and upon us in him, and to him we are to have recourse for a full answering of it. And this cannot be answered without a new birth here, which ends in a perfection hereafter. And Christ, by a plain precept, has made it absolutely necessary now 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. For being by nature spiritually dead, there must be a restoration to a spiritual life, if ever any be happy. 'God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.' 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. How can any, in any age, enjoy an infinite holy God, without being changed from their impurity?

Prop. 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, and it is not intelligible by us how God can make a man happy without

regeneration.

What semblance of reason can be given that any one who is a slave of Satan, a child of wrath by nature, 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 he can be capable of and communion with God I understand not; 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 has 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 filth. This unfitness must be removed by regeneration before this privilege man had by creation can be restored. Not that this restored righteousness is the cause of our communion with God in happiness, 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 freely with him in a way of intimate love, without such a qualification of grace: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loves righteousness; his countenance does behold the upright.' He must, therefore, hate iniquity, and cannot love an unrighteous nature because of his love to righteousness; 'his countenance beholds the upright,' he looks upon him with a smiling eye, 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 nature must be changed. There can be no friendly communion between two of different natures without the change of one of them into the likeness of the other. Wolves and sheep, 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. It is as impossible for him to love it as to cease to be holy.

This change cannot be then on God's part; it must therefore be on man's part. It must therefore 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 a likeness in nature and disposition; it is by grace only that the sinner is made capable of converse with God.

(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, since he is not subject to the law of God, neither will be: one that cannot bear him, but abhors his honour and the apprehensions of his holiness?

Man naturally has risings of heart against God, looks upon him under some dreadful notion, has an utter aversion from him; alienation and enmity are inseparable: Col. i. 21, 'You who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds.' It does 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, thereby making him willing, 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, and therefore God brings none thither which are not first begotten by him to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: 1 Peter i. 3, 4, 'Which according to his mercy has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.' It cannot be honourable for the wisdom of God to give a right to eternal life to one that continues a child of the devil, and bestow his love upon one that resolves to give his own heart to sin and Satan.

This which I have now discoursed is founded upon men's natural

notions in their right reason. But if we look into the Scripture it is certain there is no other way but this: 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 God has made happy without this alteration, nor in the strictest inquiries can we conceive any other way possible; therefore if there be any one present that has hopes to enjoy everlasting happiness without regeneration, he expects that which God never yet bestowed upon any, and which, according to our understanding, God cannot, without wrong to his holiness and wisdom, confer upon any person. 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. 5. It is so necessary, that the coming and sufferings of our Lord and Saviour would seem insignificant without it. That this regeneration was a main end of his coming, is evident by his making this one of the main doctrines he was, as a prophet and teacher, sent from God to make known to the world, it being the first he taught Nicodemus. Jesus Christ came to glorify God, and to glorify himself in redeeming a people. And what glory can we conceive God has, what glory can Christ have, if there be no characteristical difference between his people and the world? And what difference can there be but in a change of nature and temper, as the foundation whence all other differences do result? Sheep and goats differ in nature.

The righteousness which is given through our Mediator is the same, in the essentials and respects it bears to God, as we had at first. And his threefold office of king, priest, and prophet, is in order to it: his priestly, 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. 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 in to be transmitted to us by spiritual regeneration. In this respect renewed

men are called his seed, and counted to him for a generation, as Ps. xxii. 30, 'A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord ("la'adonai") for a generation,' to Christ, 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, 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: Mat. i. 21, 'He shall save his people from their sins.' From sin as the cause, from hell as the consequent. If from sin, was it only from the guilt of sin, and to leave the sinful nature unchanged? Was it only to take off 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 congruous to the honour of God's wisdom and holiness, and therefore to purify us: Tit. ii. 14, 'To redeem us from all iniquity,' all parts of it, 'by purifying unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' 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,' Col. ii. 12, 18, Eph. ii. 5, 6. If any man without a new nature could set foot into heaven, a great intendment 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: 1 John iii. 8, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might

destroy the works of the devil.' These works are two, sin, and the misery consequent upon it. Upon the destruction of sin necessarily follows the dissolution of the other which was knit with it. 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 against God 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 lain 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: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Was it to bring us to God with all our pollutions, which were the cause God cast us off? 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 would bring another to a prince to introduce him into favour, bring him into his presence in a slovenly and sordid habit, such a garb which he knew was hateful to the prince? Neither will our Saviour, nor can he bring sinners in such a plight 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, 1 John i. 5-7. 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 please God, and to glorify him 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 without any change of nature, but with its former

enmity and pollution? Will you say his mercy would be glorified? How can that be without a wrong to his purity, and a provocation to his justice? Suppose such a dispute were in God, would not holiness, wisdom, justice, joined together, over-vote mercy?

But since there can be no such dispute, how can we conceive that mercy, an infinite perfection in God, can desire anything 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. ii. 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 to find any benefit by the death of Christ without a new nature, any more than from God without it.

Prop. 6. 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,' Titus iii. 5, 2 Thess. ii. 13. 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 does 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 witness to us that we are the children of God, if there be no principle in us suitable to God as a father, no childlike frame? Is the Spirit only to bring things to remembrance for a 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, so averse from God and his worship, be changed? He is a 'quickening Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 6, 'the Spirit gives life.' How can that be while we lie rotting in our former death? It is a 'Spirit of holiness.' Can he dwell in a soul that has an unholy nature? Though

he find men so at his first coming, 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. 7. 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. Not a wheel, not a pin in all this clock of the heart but is out of frame, not one part wherein sin and Satan have not left the marks of their feet: Titus i. 15, 'Their mind and conscience is defiled.' It is clearer to a regenerate soul that it is so, since by the light of grace he discerns a filth in every faculty. The more knowledge of God he has, 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, as wine and water mingled together are in every part of the vessel, yet every faculty is in part renewed; and grace and sin lie not so huddled together but that the soul can distinguish them, and be able to say, this is grace, this is part of the new Adam, and this is sin, and part of the old Adam in me.

Because there was an universal depravation by the fall, regeneration must answer it in its extensiveness 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 bemired by the puddle of sin, and we must be all over washed by the water of grace. A whole sanctification is the proper fruit of reconciliation: 2 Thess. v. 23, 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly.' Reconciliation was of the whole man, so must regeneration. Sin has rooted itself in every part; ignorance and error in our understandings; pride, and self-love, and enmity in our wills; all must be uprooted by a new grace, and the triumphs of sin spoiled by a new birth.

Prop. 8. 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 a 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 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 gives them some countenance in the minds of men, though not in their affection. Men cannot conceive any notion of God's greatness, majesty, and holiness, but they must also conceive something necessary to an enjoyment of him (wherein their felicity consists), 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 a converse with so pure a majesty. The wiser sort of heathens did see 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. They acknowledged the wings of it to be clipped, 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, That there could not be a reformation unless God would take flesh. They had 'the work of the law written in their hearts,' Rom. ii. 15. They knew such works were to be done; they found themselves unable to do them. Whence 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 "homoiosis toi theoi", 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 says, 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.

II. I come to show that regeneration is necessary.

1. It is necessary to a gospel state.

(1.) Nothing can exist in any state of being without a proper form. That which has not the form of a thing is not a thing of the same species. He cannot be a man that wants a rational form of a man, a soul. And how can any man be a Christian without that which does essentially constitute 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: 1 Cor. xv. 10, '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.' 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 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 a 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, the understanding, will, and affections.

(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: John v. 22, 'For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.' Ver. 27, 'And has given him authority to execute judgment.' 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 says, ver. 30, 'I can of myself do nothing;

as I hear, I judge.' 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 does 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, 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God' (so they were before), 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 has 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 exerting his power fashions them to be vessels of honour to himself. It is not God's choice of any man which puts any man 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 this way of the new birth, as 2 Thess. ii. 13, 'God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' 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 brings this in. 'A chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people,' are joined together, 1 Peter ii. 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 and

filthiness of nature, and the necessity of the circumcision of the heart and the purification of nature. Hence baptism is called 'the laver of regeneration,' Titus iii. 5, many understanding it of baptism. Not that these did confer 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, says 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 Rom. ii. 29, says the apostle, 'He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit.' So that partaking of baptism, and being entrusted with the oracles of God, make a man no more a Christian than circumcision, &c., did make a man a Jew. He is only a Christian that has 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.

## 2. It is necessary to the performance of gospel duties.

(1.) There can be no preparation to any service without it. Man's soul at first could make a 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. ii. 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, as Rom. vi. 17, 'But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you,' or, 'unto which you were delivered.' 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, will not obey the directions of the pilot; and he that wants grace will be carried away with the breath of every sin and temptation. All the

motions and railings 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 any more than it had at first, which was none at all. 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 by nature more to his posterity than what 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.

(2.) Therefore we cannot act 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, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' 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, as Hosea xiv. 9, 'The just shall walk in them,' 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. xxxvi. 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 everything 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. Nothing can exceed the bounds of its nature, for then it should exceed itself in acting. Whatsoever service, therefore, does proceed 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 does always tincture the fruit of it. Our Saviour, by his interrogation, implies an impossibility that those that are evil should speak good things: Mat. xii. 84, 'O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.' 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 what-soever springs from them. There is not one righteous man by nature, neither Jew nor Gentile, all are concluded under sin: Rom. iii. 10, 'There is none righteous, no, not one;' none that 'understands and seeks God,' &c. He adds *not one* twice; he exempts none, not one righteous by nature, not one righteous action by nature: 'none that does good, no, not one.' He applies it to all mankind. A poisonous nature can produce nothing but poisonous fruit. Our actions smell as rank as nature itself. Whatsoever rises from thence, though never so spacious and well-coloured, is evil and unprofitable. If, therefore, we would produce good fruit, we must have a new root, seed, and spring. Our sour nature must be changed into a sweetness and purity. If the vine be empty, the fruit will be so too: Hosea x. 1, 'Ephraim is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit to himself,' or, 'equal to himself,' "yeshaweh". Unless the tree be good, the fruit can never be generous: Mat. vii. 17, 18, 'Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' 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 does 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 against the stream of natural observation. 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 does not proceed from it; as a drunkard gives an alms, his giving alms has no infection inherent from that particular habit of drunkenness, but from the nature, which is wholly corrupt, it has. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,' Job xiv. 4. Who can bring a clean service out of a miry heart? Not one man in the world. We cannot, therefore, perform any evangelical service if those foundations be considered.

Not spiritually, because we are flesh. God must be 'worshipped in spirit,' John iv. 44; in a spiritual manner, with spiritual frames. The apostle speaks of 'walking in the spirit,' Phil. iii. 3, and 'praying in the Holy Ghost,' Jude 20. None can act spiritually but those that are 'born of the Spirit;' 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 up 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: Mat. vii. 16, '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,' 1 Cor. ii. 14, how should he perform the duties belonging to God, since they are spiritually 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 Gods 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,' 1 Peter ii. 5. We must have the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost in us before we can have a tincture 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, and invigorating our reasons and wills, before we can worship God as God in a spiritual manner.

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, Rom. xii. 1, to 'present our bodies a living sacrifice.' 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, Eph. ii. 1, and all our works before repentance are dead works, Heb. vi. 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 carcass, not of a man. A statue, by the stonecutter'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 does incapacitate 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 grace. Spiritual motions can no more be without a spiritual life than bodily motions can be without an enlivening soul. 'The living, the living, they shall praise thee,' and Ps. lxxx. 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. ix. 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 putrefied rank carcass a fit present for a king? or a man full of running sores and boils over his whole body 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 stinking rotten dust, because coming from a dead and rotten 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.

Not graciously, because we are corrupt. By the same reason that we are to speak with grace, Col. iv. 6, and to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord, Col. iii. 16, 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: Hosea vii. 14, 'They have not cried to me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds.' How can there be an exercise of that which is not? The skill of the musician cannot discover itself till the instrument be made tuneable. The heart must be strung with grace

by the Spirit, before that Spirit can touch the strings to make harmony to God in a gospel service. Our tempers must be changed, our hearts fitted, before he 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 has nothing of God and his grace in it? It is said, 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,' Prov. xxii. 15. So is corruption in the heart of a man, like poison in a bundle of stuff; it is entered into the very composition of us. A law of sin is predominant in a natural man, Rom. vii. 93, which does influence all his actions. Strong habits will interest themselves in all we go about, and all a man's services are regulated by it, for he has 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. xiii. 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 does 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 anything fly to heaven without wings? We are to walk as Christ walked; how can we do it without a principle of kin 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 some 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.

Not 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 anything 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,' Rom. viii., and whilst that habit sways, it cannot. This inclination to sin, and consequently aversion to good, is incorporated in nature, like blackness in a black person, or spots in a leopard; they are accustomed to sin, and cannot do good, Jer. xiii. 23. 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. i. 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 ratified into air or fire. Keep up iron many years in the air by the force of a loadstone, 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, as Philip. ii. 13, 'It is God which works in you both to will and to do.' 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: 1 Peter ii. 2, 3, 'The sincere milk of the word' 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. vii. 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 spiritual, 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 has 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,' James i. 25; a servile spirit does not suit a free law, neither is it a fit frame for an evangelical service.

Nor delightfully. We can never perform spiritual services with delight, because we are alienated. This we are to do. Paul 'delighted in the law of God,' Rom. vii. 22; and the law was the 'delights' of David, Ps. cxix. 92; 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 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 has no knowledge of God, and therefore can have no delight in God or in his service. It is impossible we can come before him 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 has wrong notions of duties, looks upon them as drudgeries, not as advantages: Mal. i. 13, 'Ye said, Behold, what a weariness it is,' &c. 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,' Heb. x. 34. We can never be in a holy ecstasy 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: Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is within my heart,' in my bowels. 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 says, John viii. 47, 'Ye therefore hear them not,' that is, the words of God, 'because you are not of God.' 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, Ps. xliii. 3, 4.

Well, 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 regeneration only can make us delight to come to our father, and to cry Abba to him.

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,' John iv. 24. God is a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit. God is truth, and therefore must be worshipped in truth. 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. iii. 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: Rom. iii. 4, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar,' 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. ii. 2.

Now, sincerity cannot be without a new nature,

(1.) Because there are no divine motives which should sway the soul. Most services of natural men have such dirty springs, so unsuitable to that raised temper men should have in dealing with God, that they produce sacrifices not fit to be offered to an earthly governor: Mal. i. 8, 'If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?' &c., 'offer it now unto thy governor will he be pleased with thee?' 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? Titus i. 15, 'To them that are defiled and unbelieving

nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.' The mind, which is the repository of natural light, and the conscience, which is the advocate of natural light, and applies it upon particular occasion, 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 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 has 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, says 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, as Mat. x. 41, 42, '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.' One may receive a member of Christ out of respect to Christ and the relation the person has to him, another man 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— 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 has some presumption to be saved by, but it is not his constant frame—I say, one may be from grace, the other from nature.

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 (brass is good in its kind, but not so good as silver), but not evangelically good, without a renewed affection to God: John xiv. 15, 'If you love me, keep my commandments;' 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. vi. 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.

(2.) 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 a goodness or badness upon the service: Luke xi. 34, 'If the eye be evil, the whole body is full of darkness' (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 everything consists in answering the end for which it was framed. That which Jonas 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: Mat. vi. 5, 'They pray to be seen of men,' and Mat. xxiii. 5, 'But all their works they do to be seen of men.' 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 acknowledgements of God? The devil could entreat 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 has 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 depraved 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 come short of the glory of God: Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;' 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 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.

Well then, 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, has a moral influence upon every service; when we have the same end in our redeemed services, as God had in his redeeming love.

Not humbly. 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: Ezek. xi. 19, '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.' Gospel duties require a pliability and tenderness of heart. Adam's overvaluing 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, Isa. vi. 2, as having nothing to glory in of their own. And the chief design of the gospel is to beat down all glorying in ourselves: 1 Cor. i. 29, 31, 'That no flesh should glory in his presence; let him that glories, glory in the Lord.' 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.

Not constantly. 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. viii. 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: Ps. lxxviii. 37, 'Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' 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 has no inward principle of motion, but is moved by some outward force. When that is removed, the motion languishes. 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 fear of hell, terrors of death, 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 thorn. Stony ground may bring forth blades; but for want of root, they will quickly wither: Mat. xiii. 5, 20. 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 earthy parts in them, will not continue their station. There is no being without, stable, but God; and no principle stable within, but grace: Heb. xiii. 9, 'It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.' Whatsoever service is undertaken upon changeable motives, is as changeable as the bottom upon which it stands. If credit, slavish fear of God, worldly interest, inspire us with some seeming holy resolutions, 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: Philip i. 10, 11, first, 'approve things that are excellent;' and then follows, 'without offence, till the day of Christ.' A stately profession can no more hold out against the floods of temptation, than a beautiful building can stand against the winds without a good foundation under ground. It is the Spirit of the Lord within, as well as without, can only maintain the standard against temptation, Isa. lix. 19.

Well then, upon the whole, 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 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.

(2 ) Regeneration 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: Isa. lix. 1, 2, 'But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.'

For, first, what did make the first separation, was it not sin? God told Adam before, what the issue would be, upon his eating the forbidden fruit: Gen. ii. 17, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' 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: Gen. iii. 19, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' 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,' Eph. iv. 18; 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 servant of sin. 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.

Secondly, 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 cashiered us? It was a spiritual death; and is the carcass of a soul fit for God's complacency? There must be not only a satisfaction to his justice for the reinstating man into his favour (this is done by Jesus Christ); but a restoring of his image, this is done by the Holy Ghost. It 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 eyes 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.' Isa. lxii. 14, 'The righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns.' 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 total 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.

Thirdly, The elect themselves have no interest in God's favour of delight without it. 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.

Fourthly, Hence will follow, that no privilege 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: 2 Cor. v. 16, '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.' 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 pronounces 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, Mat. xii. 48, 49. 'My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it,' Luke viii. 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 has some kind of natural union with all things in the world; he has being with all creatures, rational faculties with angels, sense with animals, vegetation with plants; he wants only that with God which could 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 can 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 cornerstone in the heavenly building; we must be first smoothed and altered by grace.

First, 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 the devil 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', Eph. ii. 2, 'Who now works in the children of disobedience,' "enegotos en huiois". Working and working in, as a 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 got by sin must be removed, and another nature, which is divine, put in the place first (in order of nature), before we can be united to Christ, and enjoy the benefits of union with him.

Secondly, 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 meet 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 first by a living soul; we must be united to the other by a quickening Spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam, without bearing an heavenly image, 1 Cor. xv. 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; as 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' 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 (Rom. viii. 9, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his'), it is less intelligible, how it can be without an assimilation of our nature to the nature of Christ. 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 loathe to have nasty things about us, and will the holy Jesus endure a loathsome putrefying soul to be joined to him?

Thirdly, How can anything be vitally united to another without life? It is a vital union, by virtue of which believers are called Christ (1 Cor. xi. 12, 'As all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ'); and it is compared to the union of the members of a natural body, Rom. xii. 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 the parts of the body, and exercises in every part its vital operations. The Spirit

therefore, which is the band of this union, communicates life to every member wherein he resides, as well as in the head. What man would endure a dead body to be joined to him, though it were the carcass of one he never 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?

Upon these accounts does result the necessity of regeneration; without it, 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 has 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 has 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: 1 Cor. vi. 7, 'But you are sanctified, but you are justified;' both go together. We are not justified before faith, because we are justified by it, Rom. v. 1; and faith is the vital principle whereby we live: Gal. ii. 20, 'The life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' 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: Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity?' He will subdue our

iniquities. 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 was 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, Rom. viii. 1. Pardon would be unprofitable, unless he that were pardoned were made righteous inchoately here, and had a right to, and hope of, a perfect righteousness hereafter. If righteousness hereafter were not imparted in this manner, it would be an argument a man were still under the law, which says, 'he that does them shall live in them' (which is impossible in a man that has 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 a separation from defilement: 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, '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.' The new name in adoption is never given till the new creature be framed. 'As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 14, "houtoi", those very persons; that is the signal mark, that they are led by the Spirit; therefore first enlivened by the Spirit. A childlike relation is never without a childlike 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,' Rom. i. 4. 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: Hos. i. to, 'Ye are the sons of the living God.' 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 spiritual life. What advantage is there in being 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 it. 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: ver. 4-6, 'He has 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 has made us accepted in the beloved.' 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 arises from grace, as damnability arises from sin. God damns none, unless they be damnable; neither does 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 ciphers, 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 significance depends upon the figure, which, if absent, the rest would be nothing All moral perfections, without a new nature, are but ciphers in God's account: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' Grace is only a good work: Philip. i. 6, 'He which has begun a good work in you, will perform it till the day of Christ;' 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 he 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. The services of the flesh cannot please God: Rom. viii. 8. 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' 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 as acceptable as the duties of a good man; but considering what a dunghill of filthiness 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, 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 vi. 40; 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. xxviii. 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 rising 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. iv. 18; we must have his life restored to us before we can be instated in communion with him.

[1.] God can have no pleasure in it. God took a delight in the creation, and did rejoice 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 decrees 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 has 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 filthy naturally, he cannot have a 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: Job xv. 14-16, '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. 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 does abominate, 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.

[2.] As God can have no pleasure in it, 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, as Deut. xxx. 6, 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' 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 of 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 i. 6, 7.

[3.] Nay, thirdly, man naturally resists all means for it. It is the Spirit only which is the bond 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: Gal. v. 16, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' But every man

by nature (as well as the Jews) 'resists the Holy Ghost,' Acts vii. 61. 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 fullness 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 iii. 26.

[1.] Ordinances cannot be improved. The word has no place in them, John viii. 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 concoct the word, and improve it, to the bringing forth 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 the 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 Peter ii. 2.

[2.] There can be no communication of comfort. The Spirit comforts by exciting grace, and by discovering grace, not by dashes and enthusiasms. 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 has 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, Rom. viii. 16. 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 necessity 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 flowers and richest beams for his dressed garden, not for the wild desert.

(8.) We cannot be in covenant without it. 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 the devil 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 apostasy. Does he promise to be present with us? It is more than his holiness will endure, while we continue in our filthy nature.

2. The second general. 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 decrepit 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 Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy: Acts xxvi. 18, 'That they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith that is in me.' 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 privilege than our root. Had Adam retained the righteousness of his nature, he had been fit for that place, and that place for him; but poor decrepit 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. x. 19, 22. It is by the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon our hearts that we enter into the holiest by a way which he has consecrated; 'for there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination or a lie,' Rev. xxi. 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. iv. 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. It is necessary to a state of glory.

(1.) Not that there is a natural connection 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 has 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 has 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 has 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 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, a 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: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' But it is the veracity and faithfulness of God which is meant by righteousness there, and other-where in 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: John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.' 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 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 of an unregenerate dead creature to a fruition of him in heaven, yet since he has 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 pitched, 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. xii. 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 and dunghill of putrefied 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 filth. 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. i. 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? 1 Cor. xv. 50, 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 till a resurrection from sin. As Jesus Christ became like unto us, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest for us, Heb. ii. 17, 'It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;' 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 garments that smelt of draff, and put other robes upon him. God is said therefore 'to work us to this thing,' "katechradzesthai", polish, that we may be fit to be clothed upon with our heavenly house, 2 Cor. v. 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: Isa. vi. 8, 'Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory;' 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 piece of putrefied flesh 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 there does arise 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 disgusting 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 indigence 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: Heb. xii. 23, 'Spirits of just men made perfect.' 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.

Quest. What are the duties of heaven, that cannot be performed without a new nature?

Ans. First. 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: Ps. ciii. 21, 'Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.' 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, Isa. vi.; they are commanded to worship the Lord Christ, Heb. i. 6. 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: Mat. xxii. 30, 'But are as the angels of God in heaven.' 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, Dan. vii. 10; 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 person from under an hedge, and bring him to an immediate attendance on a prince, without cleansing him, and begetting other dispositions and behaviour in him by some choice

education? God picks 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, and their ulcerous and cancerous spirits, with a sound complexion, that they may be meet to stand before him. When God calls any to do him service in a particular station in the word, he gives them another heart; so he did to Saul for the kingdom, 1 Sam. x. 9. 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, full of his prison vermin, 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?

Secondly, Contemplation of God is a work in heaven. There shall be a perfect knowledge; therefore a delightful speculation. The angels behold his face, Mat. xviii. 10, and that always. The saints shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. 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,

First, A change of judgment. The eye must be restored. It is as possible for a blind eye to behold the sun, or a blear eye to stare in the face of it, without watering, 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 does elevate us to the knowledge of him. Things that are corporal 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,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12, perfectly, as far as the capacity of a creature can extend. 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.

Secondly, 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. i. 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 does offer 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, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 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.

Thirdly, Love is a 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 leave of us, as having no business there. 'Charity never fails,' 1 Cor. xiii. 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 pleasures more than God in the world, 2 Tim. iii. 4, 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, Dent. xxx. 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 has a hatred of God, cannot perform the main duty of heaven; and therefore what should he do there?

Fourthly, 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. vi. 3, can never be a natural man's; for how can he possibly praise that which he hates? What is the note of glorified saints? It is Hallelujah, Rev. xix. 1, 'Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God.' And again they said, Hallelujah, ver. 3. 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns,' ver. 6. Nothing but *hallelujah* four times, ver. 1, 3, 4, 6. How can that heart frame an *hallelujah*, that is stuffed 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, 2 Thes. i. 10, 12. 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: Gen. ii. 8, There he 'put the man whom he had formed.' Man must be new-formed before he be brought into that place, which is the anti-type of Eden, the place of eternal and spiritual pleasure. A natural man can no more relish the rewards of heaven, than a dead carcass 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, Isa. lvii. 20, 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. viii. 6. Righteousness in the soul is the necessary qualification for the peace and joy in the kingdom of God: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' While malice remains in the devil's nature, were he admitted into heaven he would receive a torment instead of a 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,

First, 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: 1 John iii. 2, 'Now we are the sons of God; and it does 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.' He seems to intimate this, that we can never be like him when he does appear, 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 the top-stone of it in our glorification, Eph. v. 27. 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 did neither please them nor reform them. And when Satan appeared before God, among the angels, Job i. 6, neither God's presence nor his speaking to him did anywise 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 a felicity can be enjoyed in a contrariety to and separation from the fountain of it: Ps. lxxiii. 27, 'Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.' 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,' 2 Cor. iv. 18. 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.

Secondly, 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, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. There is none but God in heaven is the chief object of their love and delight. The presence of God makes 'the fullness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 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 good 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 wings to 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,' Ps. lxxviii. 10; to 'forsake his law,' Ps. cxix. 53; to be 'far from his law,' Ps. cxix. 150. Darkness does not more naturally vanish at the appearance of the sun, than an old nature will fly away 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 i. 5; man is darkness itself, as if nothing else entered into the composition of his corrupt nature, Eph. v. 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.

Thirdly, The company of the saints is an adjunct of that happiness in heaven. A sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, Mat. viii. 11, in a festival 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 firstborn,' is not the least thing in the composition of this happiness, Heb. xii. 22, 23. What joy is that man capable of which should be surrounded with company he has the greatest disaffection to, where he could not meet with any one person without the holy quality he has 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 anything, the more we loathe that which is opposite to it; all the folly in their hearts here 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.

Fourthly, Spiritual delights inconceivable are in that state, 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 pleasures,' and are 'satisfied with the fatness of his house,' Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9. Now, is it a fleshly fatness? 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: Rom. viii. 5, '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;' "fronousin" signifies to savour or relish. There must be a transformation by the renewing of the mind, Rom. xii. 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 anything 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: Tit. i. 15, 'To the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure.' An ill humour on the palate tinctures the meat, and embitters 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 does surmount a star in brightness? The best unregenerate man is sunk in sense, swallowed up in sense; and what suitableness can there be between a spiritual delight and a sensual frame? True pleasures and contrary desires can never abide together. A carnal man has no apprehensions of spiritual delights but by the measures of animal pleasures. 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.

Use. If 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 and patching, 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: Gen. ii. 17, '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,' "mot tamut". I suppose there is nothing here of a corporal death meant (as I have said before), 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, *tomorrow* such and such a plague shall come, it was certainly so. The destruction of Nineveh in forty days had been too, had they not repented. When he promised and 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. xii. 41. And though God threatened Hezekiah with death, and bids him set his house in order, yet he fixed no time, Isa. xxxviii. 1. Besides, a temporal death was not necessary to his punishment; God might have flung 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, Gen. iii. 12, as a punishment superadded upon his sin, as well as the rest, of his eating his bread in the sweat of his brows, 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 deprivation, a loss of a noble frame, a beautiful rectitude. How may we cry, as the prophet in another case: Isa. xiv. 12, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground!' How is our beauty not only defaced, but changed into deformity? How dreadfully are we fallen, not only to lame ourselves, but dead ourselves, 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 make, without a new birth. Oh that we had a true and sensible prospect of this! Give me leave to say that though the fell 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 observing 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 in another case: 1 Cor. xv. 24, 'Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame.' How strange and uncouth does 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 spirits 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 by carnal generation; 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 does often bless them, and very much, and I doubt not but a great number that are regenerate had the first seeds sown in them by a religious education. And I have made this 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. i. 2, yet no question his

religious instructions from his parents did much facilitate this work. Use all endeavour 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 everything else without this to enable us to enter into the kingdom of God.

(1.) 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, does no more fit him for heaven than the stone in the head of a toad expels his venomous nature. We have more relics of 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 brains 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 Sanhedrin. Something else was requisite besides this; a new birth was still wasting. 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 writ 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 errors out of men's brains, yet not be regarded by Christ; but he says

to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity,' Mat. vii. 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.

Well then, a man may 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 and pack of knowledge is not wisdom among men, without an application of that knowledge to particular exigencies and usefulness.

(2.) Outward reformation is not sufficient. 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, Ps. xlv. 13. What a vanity would it be to boast of freedom from other diseases, if you have the plague upon thee? What a poor comfort is it to brag 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 understanding and will; it begins at the spirit and descends from thence to the body, 1 Thess. v. 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 waft us 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,

[1.] From force and 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. xiv. 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, [2.] from 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 gross devil to make way for seven more spiritual ones. The interest which restrains outward acts will not restrain inward lusts.

Well then, an outward reformation without an inward grace, can no more rectify nature, than an abstinence from luxury can cure a disease a man has contracted through intemperance, without some other physic to pluck up the root of the distemper. Outward applications of salves and ointments 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. ii. 3. Outward reformation does but sweeten the conversation, but does not purge the man. He only is a vessel unto honour who has purged himself from these things: 2 Tim. ii. 21, 'If a man therefore purge himself from those, he shall be a vessel unto honour.' Outward reformation only, it is a cleansing of our life, but not ourselves. Self-nature must be purged.

(3.) Morality 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. A 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 these 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. 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 dung 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 has 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: 1 Peter i. 28, 24, 'For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass, the grass withers, and the flower thereof fades away.' 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 has 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 can not 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 hindrance of regeneration, without the overpowering 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.

(4.) Religious professions are not sufficient. 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: 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The Lord knows who are his: and let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' 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: Rev. iii. 1, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' 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: Mat. xix. 28, 'Ye that have followed me in regeneration, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Judas had followed Christ till that time, and after, in a profession, but not in the regeneration, not from a regenerated principle.

(5.) 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: Isa. xi. 16, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? Wash ye, make ye clean.' 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 great expense 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. v. 6. There was another circumcision made without hands, the work of God, that was required, Col. ii. 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 carcass, 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 unto 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; a stinking breath may make as good music to the ear in a pipe as a sound one. There is something more necessary than a bare performance of duties.

(6.) Nay, more, convictions are not sufficient. Nicodemus was startled by our Saviour's miracles, believes him to be a prophet sent by God, acknowledges that God was with him, John iii. 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 ploughed, 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: Hosea vi. 5, 7, 'I have hewed them by my prophets, but they like men have transgressed the covenant.' 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 stork, and high time to get that new nature, whereby God will know thee to belong to him? Professions may be false, outward reformation 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.

Use 2. 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? 1 Cor. vi. 9, 'Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived,' &c. 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 brought, he has for ever lost you. It is he that cherishes

such notions, for he has no pleasure 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 has joined, flesh and destruction, a new birth and a kingdom? That which does 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,

(1.) God must be false to himself. False he must be to his truth, false to 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.

(2.) 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 a world without him, Eph. ii. 12.

(3.) Jesus Christ must be a liar, and the gospel false, if ever there be a heaven enjoyed by an old nature. He has 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 tomorrow, 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.

(4.) Suppose God should reverse his gospel (which cannot be), and declare another, I cannot see how the ease 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.

Well then, this doctrine is so certainly true, that if an angel from heaven should declare the contrary he ought not to be believed: Gal. i. 8, 'Let him be accursed;' that is, he would be more a devil than an angel, and it could be an accursed doctrine. He must found his doctrine upon another gospel, and a gospel printed in hell, but impossible to have an *imprimatur* 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?

2. 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; the fostering the old nature in us is a valuing that which God has manifested his hatred of, and a slighting all the expressions of his love. It draws a greater guilt upon our persons than Adam did by his fall upon our natures: John xv. 22, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, then had not had sin.' If I had not told them those things, and preach 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'.

3. 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. xx. 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.

(1.) Such 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 chance 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 the door, but if renewed is infinitely happier than any one unrenewed can be with all worldly felicity.

(2.) Such 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. iv. 8 he is said to be a 'righteous judge,' which could not be if he gave the same rewards to both the contrary qualifications. The devil may as soon be eased, 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: Mat. vii. 23, 'I never knew you:' 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.

Well, then, I wish 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?

Use 8. Is of comfort. Is it so, that without regeneration there is no salvation? Then how great is the comfort of that person, who has attained this necessary thing! What a foundation is here for the composition of never 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 has 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 the 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 a man be in Christ he is a new creature;' the apostle does not say, he is a strong creature, or a tall creature. St John reckons three different states of Christians, 1 John ii. 13, 14, children, young men, and fathers, and all in a state of the knowledge of God.

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,' Ps. lxxxvii. 5, though the time of their birth were not exactly known by them. 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 discernible.

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: 1 Peter i. 3, 'He has begotten us to a lively hope, to an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.' Had not God intended you for an everlasting converse with himself, he would not have taken such pains, but have let you lie 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 full of gaps, ready to fall, that your reborn 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, 2 Tim. iv. 8, 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. 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 a fellowship with God in duties of worship, as a foretaste of a perpetual communion with him; to an improvement of all graces, to the most perfect dress at last of all beautiful grace, which may completely fit you for an everlasting sight of God in heaven.

Use. 4. If without the new birth there is no entering into heaven, then it stands upon you 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: John vi. 63, 'The words of Christ are spirit and life.' John x. 10, 'I am come that you might have life.' He has no interest in the gospel that has 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: Rom. iv. 8, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' 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: Acts xxvi. 18, 'That they may receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me.' The alteration of our frame is motifs, more discernible to us, than that of our relative states; the new 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 the 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' evidences our being justified by grace, Titus iii. 57; the apostle infers the one from the other.

2. Therefore, by the knowledge of this only you can gain comfort. The great desire is, Oh 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, Titus i. 5-7; the Spirit as a comforter is to guide into all truth, John xvi. 13, into that truth which is sanctifying, John xvii. 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 after, therefore, those essential properties of the new nature. Christ preached duty and comfort together; his first sermon, Mat. v., 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: Gen. xx. 6, 'Yea, I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart.' 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 ask yourselves these two or three questions.

1. How stand your hearts to God and sin? Is there a bias in the will, which does 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. viii. 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? Rom. viii. 10, 'The body is dead because of sin, and the spirit is life because of righteousness.' What humbling of inward pride, what striving against inward sins, what loathing of inward corruptions?

2. What delight have you in spiritual duties? Do your souls spring up in a service? 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: Ps. cxix. 103, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' 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. ii. 14), 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 does distinguish 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 did arise 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?

3. How do you live? Have you another life 'by the faith of the Son of God?' Gal. ii. 20; another faith beside the common faith, not resting in assent, but 'working by love,' Gal. v. 6. Do you live to yourselves? That is proper to a state of nature. Or do you live to God? 2 Cor. v. 18. That is proper to a state of grace: Gal. ii. 19, 'I am dead to the law, 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, dead, cold, dark, lifeless Christ? This frame is a quite contrary thing to Christ. 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. 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: Rom. vi. 12, '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.' 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.

(1.) 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.

I speak now but little of these things, because the next discourse will lead me to speak more of them.

(2.) 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 out of 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, nay, without a rag to your backs, will admit you. If those that are already renewed must be every day putting off the old and putting on the new man, Eph. iv. 22, 24, how much more need have you who have not dropped one scale, or sweat out one spirit 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 choose weeds

but flowers to plant in their delightful gardens. God indeed does choose 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,' Mat. v. 8. It is a duty incumbent on us to love God. Since we are bound to love God, we are bound to love whatsoever has 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 has 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 x. 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 equivalent 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: Eph. i. 10, 'He has gathered together in one all things in Christ.' 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 innocence, 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 fight 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 filthy 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 show us our indigence, and not also to spur us on to seek a remedy? Melanchthon says, 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 inquiry after your future state, if your conscience 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 inquire, Ps. iv. 6, 'Who will show 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 that little reason in you 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 everything to endeavour its recovery to its primitive purity, and struggle under that which is preternatural to it? A fountain will not rest till it has wrought out the filth which has 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 himself of all *de jure*, but by the mediation of Christ, those were left (Col. i. 17, 'By him all things consist'), 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, 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: another state and another nature; the regaining of the former must be equally sought with the latter, a being in another covenant by justification (for naturally we are in the covenant with Adam), and a 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 spiritually 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: Rom. v. 21, 'That as sin has reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' 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 received, 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 i. 25. It will put our souls in order, and set the Israelite free from the Egyptian taskmaster; 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 necessity is upon them. Never did any repent of it, never any will; it has been a comfort upon a deathbed 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 expresses it with some regret, 1 Cor. xv. 8, 'as one born out of due time.' 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 come 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.

Exhortation. 3. Seek it presently; 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 did 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 on again? Are you sure you may not be past the hope as well as the happiness of the new birth before mans 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 wherein God commanded him, Gen. xvii. 23. Why should you not imitate Abraham in the ready and speedy circumcision of the heart? Though God does wait 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 their soul ceases for ever,' Ps. xlix. 8; no more under the offers of a redeeming Saviour, no more under the motions of a renewing Spirit. Christ breaks the nations like a potter's vessel, Ps. ii. 9. A vessel before it be burned may be macerated in water, and formed anew; but when it has 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.

- (1.) 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 the devil's tinder. Job knew it; therefore when his sons feasted he sacrificed, chap. i. 5. He was jealous of their inbred corruption, from the sense of the sins of his own youth, which we find him complaining of, Job xiii. 26; therefore he feared his children, having the same temptations, might fall into the same transgressions. Sow, by an early regeneration, many diseases of the soul are prevented, as well as the great crack 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, Oh, 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.

(2.) In doing much service for God. Young men are usually of active spirits and vigorous affections, whereas age does freeze all youthful warmth. Such, like Peter, can 'gird themselves, and go whither they please,' John xxi. 18, 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, or mettle, a young man have, grace will bias, put into a right channel, and direct to an useful end. The early regenerate will be eminent in piety; for in a 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, Rom. iv. 20. Abraham, it is said, was 'strong in faith, giving glory to God.' 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.

(3.) In manifesting the power of the grace of God. An early regeneration is the great ornament of the gospel. It evidences 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.

(1.) 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: Acts ix. 6, 'He trembling, and astonished, said,' &c. There will be more amazing aggravations of sin to rack the conscience, and consequently more anguish. Putrefied 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.

(2.) Your new birth will be the more grateful to God. God loves the first fruits. He would not have the gleanings, but the first crop of everything 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,' Jer. ii. 2, 3. 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou went after me in the wilderness,' 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*: Rom. xvi. 5, 'Greet the church that is in their house, salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the [first] fruits of Achaia unto Christ.' And surely more beloved by the Lord than by the servant. God has 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 has so great an affection to him that he joins him with Noah, that famous preacher of righteousness, and Job, that mirror of patience,—Ezek. xiv. 14, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness,'—as those that had the greatest power with him, to keep off judgments from the place where they were.

(3.) Comfort 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 has 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 state of the church in after days 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 experience 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.

(4.) 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 has 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. iv. 16. A young plant in the house of God will be fat and flourishing, and full of fruit in old age, Ps. xcii. 18, 14. The weakness of the body in such is the youthfulness of grace.

(5.) The earlier the new birth, the weightier will be your glory in the kingdom of God. God rewards according to our works: Rev. ii. 23, 'I will give to every one of you according to your works.' 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 has mercy on whom he will have mercy, yet, in rewarding, he acts as a righteous judge, according to the rules of justice: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'The crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me;' and so does proportion the glory to every man's service. Young ones regenerate, that bear head against the temptations of their violent nature, shall have crowns get 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 Peter i. 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: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall have a crown of life.' 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 the stains fetched out of his garments than the poison out of his stomach? You are careful about the concerns of the body and flesh, oh be not such fools as to let the poison within get the greater head, and the plague continue in the heart.

Folly it is,

(1.) Because of the uncertainty of life. You are not lords and keepers of your own times, they are in God's hands: Ps. xxxi. 15 'My times are in thy hands.' What if he should fling that time out of his hand tomorrow, 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, chap. xxxvi. 18, then a 'great ransom cannot deliver thee.' Hell followed death close at the back, Rev. vi. 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: Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies.' Many a candle has been put out before half burnt, how often has 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 ails them: Job xxxvi. 13,14, 'They cry not when he binds them. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.' 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 today, may not have a morrow to be new born in. And to be surprised by death before you are new born, better for you, you had never been born at all.

(2.) It is folly, because if you neglect the present time, though you may live, yet your return to God by a new birth may be very uncertain. There is such a thing as a day of grace, shorter than the days of a man's life: Luke xix. 42, 'The things of their peace' were then 'hid from their eyes,' 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: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man,' or 'in man,' with this or that man; 'for that he also is flesh.' It is a threatening to those in the church, in opposition to the profane 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. Rev. x. 5, 6, 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;' that is, no time of repentance, as appears if you refer it to Rev. ix. 20, 21. It is not therefore without great reason that the apostle does double both the notes of attention, *behold*, and the time too, *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. vi. 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.

(1.) 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 putrefied and partly mouldered to dust. A young tree may more easily be taken up and transplanted than a strong old oak, which has 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—Acts viii. 23, 'bond of iniquity'—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.

(2.) In regard of the industry of the devil. 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 has 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—John vi. 70, 'One of you is a devil,'—but when he had withstood the force of our Saviour's discourses, and nourished his covetousness against his Master's frequent conviction, the devil 'entered into his heart,' John xiii. 27. 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.

(3.) In 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 does bless 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. xlvii. 47, 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, Heb. iii. 11, his oath will be irreversible, he will blow up heaven and earth 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. vi. 9, '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 neglecters 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: Ezek. xxiv. 13, 'Because I have purged thee,' that is, offered thee purging grace, 'and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.' 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 Dan. ix. 27, 'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,' that is, one week of years. And that our Saviour preached three years and an half among the Jews, and the apostles three years and an half or thereabouts before the Jews were discovenanted. 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.

Well then, let me beseech you, resolve upon this work presently. We are not to bid a poor man 'go away, and come again tomorrow,' Prov. iii. 27, 28; 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, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, so the time of his death should be an argument to us to live to him betimes. How many has this foolish *tomorrow* deceived! and many have perished *today* before the dawning of tomorrow. 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, chap. i. 14. God may make up the match between himself and you before midnight: there was less time in God's working upon the jailer.

Quest. What shall we do to get this new birth?

Answer 1. Begin with prayer; seek it from that Saviour that first made so plain a declaration of it. 'A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven,' John iii. 27. Then from heaven beg it; let God hear of you as soon as ever you come 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 will 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. Plead the promise: Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh;' and Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;' but he 'will be inquired 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 for such as breathe after it, Mat. v. 6, Hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled; beg the operation of the Spirit. Our Saviour provided the plaster, but left the Spirit to apply it; he provided the colours, his blood, 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 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. vii. 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 a 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 suitableness 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 a 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 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: Rom. vii. 9, 'For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' 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 thrown it out of doors? 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, 'Zacchaeus, come down; this day is salvation come to thy house.' Did you never hear a voice from heaven, saying, 'Come to me that you 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 these motions; answer them with

suitable affections. If Christ looks upon you, as he did upon Peter, think of what you are, and weep, Mark xiv. 72. 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 in 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: Gal. iii. 5, 'He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, does he it by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith?' 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 xvi. 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, and bowels, and inwards 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 the 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: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But ye all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.' 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. ix. 14.

## A Discourse of the Word, □ the Instrument of Regeneration

*Of his own will begot he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.—James 1:18.*

I have chosen this text to treat of the instrument of the new birth.

The apostle having advised them (verse 13, 'But let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempts he any man') not to charge God as the author of any temptation to evil, showing it to be contrary to the nature of God, who is infinite goodness and righteousness; for as he cannot be tempted with evil, so neither can he tempt any man; and declaring the true cause and spring of all evil to be inherent in ourselves, even that lust which is riveted in our nature, which he calls our own lust, - verse 14, 'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' - he takes occasion from thence to show the order of sin's working. Sin is first conceived by that original corruption in our nature, and formed and brought forth into action; and when it is finished, and grows into a habit, it 'brings forth death,' verse 15. To remove this error, which some in those days had sucked in out of a natural self-love that man has to excuse himself, and remove the cause of sin far from him, the apostle shows that God is the author and fountain of all the good we have: ver. 17, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of change.' God being the infinite Father of lights, who has no eclipses or decreases, no shadows or mixtures of darkness, but always shines with a constant and settled brightness, of this goodness has given a great evidence, in conferring the choicest mercy upon us, even a new begetting through the gospel, and thereby the relation of children to him, that we might be consecrated

to him as the first fruits and a peculiar portion. Of his own will, "bouletheis; by his mere motion, induced by no cause but the goodness in his own breast. (1.) To distinguish it from the generation of the Son, which is natural, this voluntary; of his own will, not naturally, as he begot his Son from eternity. (2.) Not necessarily, by a necessity of nature, as the sun, to which he had compared God before, does enlighten, and enliven, when matter is prepared to receive his quickening beams; but by an arbitrariness of grace. (3.) Not by any obligation from the creature; the will of God is opposed to the merit of man. The new creation answers to election; the first purpose was free, the bringing that purpose to execution is free whatsoever obligation there is, results not from the creature, but from himself, his own immutable nature, which has no variableness, nor shadow of change. "Begot us," "apekuesen", or brought us forth, for the same word "apokuei", ver. 15, is translated 'brings forth.' 'By the word of truth', a title given to the gospel both in the Old and New Testament: in the Old, Ps. xiv. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' or 'upon thy word of truth,' in the New Testament, Eph. i. 13, 'In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' So 2 Cor. vi. 7, and 2 Tim. ii. 15. And it is called truth by way of excellency, as paramount to all other truth. (1.) Either, by an Hebraism, the word of truth; that is, the true word. (2.) Or rather, by way of eminency, as containing a higher truth, more excellent in itself, more advantageous for the creature, than any other divine truth; wherein the highest glory of God, the sure and everlasting happiness of the creature, is set forth; a word which he has 'magnified above all his name,' Ps. cxxxviii. 2.

And called the word of truth.

1. In regard of the author, truth itself; and the publisher, he who was 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

2. In opposition to all false doctrines, which can never be the instruments of conversion; for error to convert to truth, is the same thing as for darkness to diffuse light, or water to kindle fire.

3. In opposition to the windy and flashy conceits of men, which can no more be instrumental in the begetting a Christian, than mere wind can beget a man.

4. In opposition to the legal shadows; the gospel declares the truth of those types. Both the law and prophecy were but as a dim candle 'in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19, but this as a sun shining out at noonday. All other discourses did stream to this as their great ocean, wherein they were to be swallowed up. The law was the word of truth, but referred to the gospel as the great end of it. This contains the whole and ultimate purpose of God, for saving men by Jesus Christ, and in him enriching them with all spiritual blessings, and not by the works of the law, and thus the Spirit, which enlightens and seals instruction upon our souls, is called 'the Spirit of truth,' John xiv. 17, as it is called a Spirit of holiness, as it makes us holy, a Spirit of grace, as it makes us gracious, or as it declares the grace of God. Some by *the word of truth* understand Christ, the essential and uncreated "logos", Word, as it is understood by some in 1 Peter i. 23, 25, 'By the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever; and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached to you.' Possibly it may be meant of Christ, who by the gospel is declared and preached to be the mediator between God and man, appointed to raise up those that are given to him. Others by *the word* there, mean the will of God of giving grace in Christ, which is manifest in, and expressed by, the gospel. But here it is evidently meant of the gospel, because of the inference the apostle makes: ver. 19, 'Be swift to hear;' that is, prize the word, wait upon the means with all readiness; 'slow to speak,' to utter your judgment of it, or be wise in your own conceit, whereof a readiness to speak peremptorily in divine truth is sometimes an evidence; 'slow to wrath' and passion, which hinder any profit by the word. 'That we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;' the chief among his creatures. The first fruits were the best of every kind to be offered to God, whereby they acknowledged God's gift of them, and desired his blessing upon them, and were given as God's peculiar right and portion. It was commanded in the law, Deut. xviii. 4. It was a custom among many of the heathens. To offer them was a token of thankfulness; not to offer them, was accounted a sign of atheism and profaneness. The new creature is God's peculiar portion taken out of mankind; and it bespeaks duty too: being consecrated to God by a new begetting, they should serve God with a new spirit, new thankfulness, new frames.

We see here,

1. The efficient of regeneration, God; 'he,' the Father of lights.
2. The impulsive or moving cause, 'his own will.'
3. The instrumental cause 'with the word of truth.'
4. The final cause, 'that we may be a kind of first fruits.'

The doctrine I am to handle is,

Doctrine. That the gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth.

The Scripture does distinguish the efficient and instrumental cause by the prepositions "ek", or, "eks", and "dia". When we are said to be 'born of the Spirit,' it is, John iii. 5, "ek pneumatos"; 1 John iii. 9, v. 1, "ek Theou"; never "dia pneumatos", or "dia Theou:" but we are nowhere said to be born *of* the word, or begotten *of* the word, but "dia logou", *by* or *with* the word, 1 Peter i. 23; and "dia euangeliou", 1 Cor. iv. 15, I have begotten you 'through the gospel.' The preposition "ek" or "eks", usually notes the efficient or material cause; "dia", the instrumental or means by which a thing is wrought. Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the devil, grace enters into the heart by the word of God; that entered by a word of error, this by a word of truth: 'Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you, John xv. 3, whereby our Saviour means the word outwardly preached by him, for it is the word spoken by him. Not that it had this efficacy of itself, but as an instrument of their sanctification, rendering them ready to every good work. The holiness, therefore, which it begets, is called the holiness of truth, Eph. iv. 24, opposed to the "epithumiai tes apates", 'lusts of deceit,' ver. 22. Lusts grow up from error and deceit, and holiness of the new man grows up from truth. The gospel administration, in regard of the effects of it, is called 'the kingdom of God,' Mark i. 14; it erects the kingdom of God in the world and in the hearts of men, and called the regeneration: Mat. xix. 28, 'Ye which have followed me in the regeneration;' the gospel administration being a creating of 'new heavens and a new earth,' Isa. lxv. 17. This is the triumphal chariot, wherein Christ rides majestically to the conquest of hearts: Ps. xiv. 4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' "'al dvar 'emut", a psalm the Jews themselves understand of the Messiah. The word of his truth is the support of his kingdom, whereby he awes sinners into submission. Peace from heaven, and the health of our

nature, is 'the fruit of the lips,' though of God's creation, Isa. lvii. 19. It is like the dew or mist which watered the ground, and prepared the earth for the formation of Adam's body, into which God breathed afterwards a living soul, Gen. ii. 6. 7.

I. For explication, take some propositions:

1. It is not the law that is this instrument. The law, taken in general for the legal administration prescribed to the Jews, was instrumental for renewing, because there was a typical gospel in that Judaic administration: Heb. iv. 2, 'For to us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.' They were evangelised, "Euangelismenoi", as the word signifies. The Judaic administration was composed of law and gospel: the moral law, as a covenant of works; the ceremonial law, representing the covenant of grace. The law of God, or gospel among them, is said to convert the soul, Ps. xix. 7. But the law, taken as a covenant of works, was not appointed for renewing the soul, otherwise what need had there been of enacting another law for that work? And those that say the law is instrumental in conversion, or inflaming our affections to obedience, say that all the benefits by it are to be ascribed to the covenant of grace in Christ. It is true, the law considered in itself is preparatory to cast men down, and show them their distance from God and contrariety to his command; but the law without the gospel never brought any man to Christ. Whatsoever it does in this case is not of itself, but by the mingling the gospel with it, which spirits it to such an end. Though the law did not encourage sin, yet it gave no help against it, but left the soul under the dominion of it, which is evident by the apostle's inference: Rom. vi. 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace.' Hence the property of the law, which is meant by 'the letter,' 2 Cor. iii. 6, is to kill, but 'the Spirit' gives life; that leaves under the severity of justice, after sin had entered; but the spiritual administration, wherein the Spirit works, is to quicken and renew the soul, and make it able to get above the guilt and power of sin. The apostle, therefore, wholly excludes the law: Gal. iii. 2, 'Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' that is, the word of faith, as the gospel is called, Rom. x. 8. By Spirit is meant, says Calvin, the grace of regeneration, as by faith is meant the doctrine of faith. I might have preached (as if the apostle had said) the works of the law till my

lungs had been worn out, and the renewing Spirit would never have entered into you by that fire, but it descended upon you in the sweet gospel dew. The gospel is therefore called the 'ministration of the Spirit,' and the 'ministration of righteousness,' 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. It is the chariot or *vehiculum* wherein the Spirit rides, the proclamation by which it is declared, the channel through which it is conveyed. The law discovers the righteousness of God as well as the gospel; but that demands a righteousness from the creature, the gospel confers a righteousness upon the creature; the law shows us God's righteousness in his nature, the gospel shows us God's righteousness in his nature and grace. The law is a hammer to break us, the gospel God's oil to cure us; the law makes sin live and our souls die,—Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died, —the gospel makes sin die and our souls live; the law awakens the lion, the gospel lets out his blood. At the best, the terrors of the law do chain up our furious affections, but the sweetness of gospel mercy changes them. The law prepares the matter, the gospel brings the new form. That was appointed for the rule of our walk, not for the restoration of our life. And they are the promises of mercy which are the motives to return; rebels will not submit to their prince as long as they know they shall have no quarter. Hue and cry makes the thief fly away the faster. By the 'great and precious promises;' we 'are made partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. The promises of the law being conditional, belong not to us without fulfilling the condition, of which we are incapable of ourselves. The law, therefore, since the fall, is destructive, the gospel restorative, and the promises of it the cords whereby God draws us.

2. The gospel is this instrument. It is an instrument to unlock the prison doors, and take them off the hinges, strike off the fetters, and draw out the soul to a glorious liberty. It is by the voice of the archangel men shall rise in their bodies; it is by the voice of the Son of God in the word that men rise in their souls. Nothing else ever wrought such miraculous changes. To make lions become lambs, Isa. vi. 6, Hosea iv. 13; beloved idols to be cast away with indignation; to make its entrance like fire, and consume old lusts in a short time: these have been undeniable realities, which have created affection and astonishment in some enemies as well as friends. It has a more excellent instrumentality in it than other providences of God, because it is a higher manifestation. Every creature conducts us to

the knowledge of God, by giving us notice of his power, wisdom, and goodness, Rom. i. 20. The declaration of his works in the world is instrumental to make men seek him, Acts xvii. 27. Every day's providence declares his patience, every shower of rain his merciful provision for mankind, Acts xiv. 17, every day's preservation of the world under a load of sin manifests his mercy. The heavens have a tongue, and the rod has a voice; the design of all is to lead men to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. If these, therefore, be some kind of instruments upon the hearts of considering men, the gospel being a discovery superior to all these, in manifesting not only a God of nature, but a God of grace, must be designed to a choicer and nobler work. The heavens and providence are instruments to instruct us, this to renew us.

It is an instrument; but,

(1.) It is not a natural instrument, to work by any natural efficacy, as food does nourish, the sun shines, or the air and water cools, or as a sharp knife cuts if it be applied to fit matter. If it were thus natural, it would not be of grace. Though the shining of the sun, or the healing by a plaster, are acts of the goodness and mercy of God, yet the Scripture calls them not by that higher title of acts of grace. If the operation were natural, the gospel would never be without its effect wherever it were preached; as the sun, wherever it shines in any land, does both enlighten and warm. Our Saviour then would have had more success, since the gospel could not have greater natural efficacy than from his lips; yet the number of his converts were probably not much above five hundred, for so many he appeared to after his resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 6, when many thousands in that land heard his voice, and saw his miracles. Christ, who was always able to give himself success, would not, perhaps for this among many other reasons, to advance his spiritual above his corporal presence, and to prevent any thoughts of any natural virtue in the word, without the power of the Spirit working by it. Every day teaches us, that though many see the glass of the gospel, yet few see the glory of God in that gospel. Were it natural, then, that all that hear it were not renewed, would be more miraculous than that any are; as it was more a miracle that the sun should stand still in Joshua's time, against its natural course of motion, than that it moves every day in the heavens. If it were a natural instrument, it must then

have life in itself, but how can the voice of a man, or the words and syllables in a book, be capable of receiving spiritual life, which they must have before they can naturally convey it to others? Were it a natural instrument, it would have the same effect upon the soul at one time as at another. But does not daily experience witness, that the word shines at some particular times upon the soul with a clearer ray than at other times, that such a soul has thought itself in another world (as it were), and that too when it has been much clouded by the weakness of the instrument declaring it? Lastly were it natural, the wisest men, men of the sharpest understandings, could not resist it, no man can hinder the sun's shining upon him, when he is under the beams of it, it would warm him whether he would or no, yet have not such been the most desperate opposers of it in all ages of the world, as well as in the times of the apostles? It is not then a natural, but a moral instrument, which will follow afterwards, when we come to consider how it works.

(2.) It is the only instrument appointed by God to this end in an ordinary way. God has made a combination between hearing and believing, Rom. x. 14, 17, so that believing comes not without hearing. The waters of the sanctuary run only through the channels of the gospel; the mines of grace are found only in the climates of the word. Why does not air nourish? Because God did not set that, but meat, apart for each an end. Though God could by his almighty power bless air to this end, yet in an ordinary way he has fixed his blessing on these natural causes of his own ordaining. God has appointed second causes for natural operations; if we would be warm, God has appointed fire and sun to warm us; he could do it immediately, by spreading a lively heat in every member, as well as he gave at first a power to fire to burn; but he uses natural instruments in natural effects, and likewise spiritual instruments in spiritual productions. God may blow in an extraordinary way upon the soul by a divine breath without any instrument, as he did immediately upon the prophets, or as he gave light to the world the three first days of the creation without a sun, but since only by the sun and stars. But God seems here to have fixed his power: Rom. i. 16, the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation;' not that his power shall always attend it, but that he will exert his power, at least ordinarily, only by it; no other organ through which the wind of the Spirit shall blow, no other sword which the Spirit shall manage but

this, Eph. vi. 13. Though our Saviour prayed upon the cross for some of his greatest enemies, who had their hands embued in his precious blood, though he was heard, yet his prayer was not answered but through Peter's ministry, to grace the first spiritual discovery of the gospel. Nothing else can have that efficacy. Had every man in Israel made a brazen serpent, and looked upon it when they had been stung, they might have looked till they had groaned their last, before they had met with any cure, because only one was of God's appointing. To a cast of an eye upon that, he had only promised his healing virtue, in that only then he had lodged his power.

(3.) It is therefore a necessary instrument.

[1.] In regard of the reasonable creature there must be some declaration. God does not ordinarily work but by means, and does not produce anything without them which may be done with them. God does not maintain the creatures by a daily creation, but by generation; he maintains that faculty of generation in them by the means of health and nourishment, and that by the means of the fruits of the earth, and does all this according to the ordinance he fixed at the creation, when he appointed every kind of creatures their proper food, and bestowed his blessing upon them, 'Increase and multiply.' So according to the method God has set of men's actions, it is necessary that this regeneration should be by some word as an instrument, for God has given understanding and will to man. We cannot understand anything, or will anything, but what is proposed to us by some external object; as our eye can see nothing but what is without us, our hand take nothing but what is without us, so it is necessary that God by the word should set before us those things which our understandings may apprehend, and our wills embrace. Now we believe things as we conceive them true, or not believe them as we conceive them false. We love, desire, delight in things, as we conceive them honest or profitable; we hate, we refuse, or grieve, as we conceive them dishonest, or troublesome, or hurtful to us; whatever we are changed by in our understandings, wills, and affections, is represented to us under some of these considerations. To make an alteration in us according to our nature of understanding, will, and affection, it is necessary there should be some declaration of things under those considerations of true, good,

delightful, &c., in the highest manner, to make a choice change in every faculty of the soul, and without this a man cannot be changed as a rational creature; he will otherwise have a change he knows not why, nor to what end, nor upon what consideration, which is an inconceivable change in a rational creature.

[2.] It is necessary the revelation of this gospel we have should be made. There is a necessity of some revelation, for no man can see that which is not visible, or hear that which has no sound, or know that which is not declared. There is also a necessity of the revelation of this gospel, since faith is a great part of this work. How can any man believe that God is good in Christ, without knowing that he has so declared himself? Since the Spirit takes of Christ's, and shows it to us, there must be a revelation of Christ, and the goodness of God in Christ, before we can believe. Though the manner of this revelation may be different, and the Spirit may renew in an extraordinary manner, yet this is the instrument whereby all spiritual begettings are wrought; the manner may be by visions, dreams, by reading or hearing, yet still it is the gospel which is revealed; the matter revealed is the same, though the formal revelation or manner may be different. Paul's regeneration was by a vision, for at that vision of the light, and that voice of Christ, I suppose him to be renewed, because of that full resignation of his will to Christ, Acts ix. 6, yet the matter of the revelation was the same, that Christ was the Messiah, for so Paul understands it, in giving him the title of Lord. Though God may communicate himself without the written word to some that have it not, yet according to his appointment, not without a revelation of what is in that word.

[3.] This necessity will further appear, if we consider that it always was so. Adam and Eve were the first after the fall wherein God did constitute his church, whose regeneration and conversion were wrought by that promise of the seed of the woman made to them in paradise; God surely putting an enmity in the heart of those to whom this first promise of an enmity was made, upon which promise a sacrifice followed, which some ground on Gen. iii. 21, 'God made them coats of skins' of beasts, which the word "'od" signifies, and is never taken in Scripture otherwise than for the outward skin of a beast. And, indeed, it is not likely that 129 years should be between the promise and the first sacrifice, for some think

Abel was killed by Cain in the 129th year after the creation, for it is certain 130 years after the creation Seth was born, Gen. v. 3. And this is confirmed, Heb. ix. 32, 'Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.' The first testament was of more ancient date than the Jewish service ordained by Moses; and some ceremonies, as sacrifices, and distinction of clean and unclean beasts, were in use before, Gen. viii. 20, so that there seems to be a sacrifice representing the Messiah for the dedication of the first testament, which Adam had received from God and transmitted to Abel, whom he taught the way of sacrificing. What regeneration Adam had was by this word of the gospel. Had not Adam believed it, he would not have delivered it to Abel; and Abel had not sacrificed, unless he had been taught so by his father, or immediately by God; but most likely by his father, because God does not use extraordinary means, when ordinary will serve. And Abel was regenerate, for it is said 'by faith he offered' this sacrifice, Heb. xi. 4: and it was faith in Christ, faith in the promised seed, for all of them in that catalogue, Heb. xi., did eye Christ by faith, as well as Moses. of whom it is particularly expressed, ver. 26, that 'he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' Considering all this, it is evident, that the ancient restoration was by the revelation of Christ and the gospel as the only necessary means. Abraham, it is likely, had some external word in his father Terah's family, by tradition from the patriarchs, and had the revelation of the promise made to him by God, Gen. xviii. 19. And it was wrought then in an ordinary way by instruction, for, for that Abraham is commended, and no doubt but Isaac and Jacob did the same, so that all along this change of the heart was wrought by a declaration of the word of the gospel.

(4.) It seems to be the standing instrument of it to the end of the world. Some indeed think the conversion of the Jews shall not be by the declarations of the word in a way of preaching and instruction, as the Gentiles were brought in, but by a visible appearance of Christ, which they ground upon Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' they shall see Christ in the clouds as pierced by them, and understand Paul's conversion by an extraordinary light shining round about him, and a voice from heaven, to be a type and pattern of God's manner of the future conversion of the Jews, which is intimated, 1 Tim. i. 16, that the

mercy he obtained was 'a pattern for them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting'. Whether this be so or no, yet however the conversion is by a revelation of that which is the matter and substance of the gospel, it is the revelation of Christ himself; and if, like Paul's conversion, by a voice, as well as by sight, by instruction as well as apparition; but it seems to me to be the perpetual standing means of regeneration. The fruits of our Saviour's ascension shall endure to the end of the world, and the enduing men with gifts for the building him a spiritual house is a great end of his ascension, Ps. lxxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8, 9, 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord might dwell among them.' He receives gifts upon his ascension, for the subduing and changing the hearts of the rebellious, that they may be a fit habitation for God, who dwells in them by his Spirit; these gifts being the fruit of so glorious an ascension, and a rich donative to him for the accomplishment of his undertaking in the world, and being given for the smoothing, polishing, and fitting rude stones to combine together for a temple for the Lord to dwell in (which is the reason why he keeps up the world). As long therefore as God has a temple, and any stone to polish, these gifts will remain in the ministry of the word, and be exercised in order to so great a building; and we may infer also by the way, that it is not likely that God does dwell in any, but such who are so subdued and formed by the ministry of the word, which is the fruit of Christ's ascension. It seems also to have an more ancient date, and founded upon the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. All that prayer in the 17th of John seems to me to run upon those articles agreed on between them. Those that were given to Christ were given to keep his word: John xvii. 6, 'Thou gave them me, and they have kept thy word.' Which word was given to Christ by God in order to be given to them: ver. 8, 'I have given them the word which thou gave me.' And in his prayer for their sanctification, her. 17, he seems to intimate that this was the ordinary method then subscribed to by both, and the settled means of sanctification; he does not only propose his desire for their sanctification, but the means, 'through thy truth,' and specifies what he means by truth, 'thy word is truth.' And what he did here pray for, for them that were then with him, he did for all that should hereafter believe, ver. 20; and though this be

meant of a further sanctification of those that were already regenerate, yet it will, I think, evidently follow that if the word by agreement between the Father and the Son be the instrument of every degree of sanctification, it must be also of the first; since there can be no faith, but refers to the object believed, and the ground why it is believed, whence 'belief of the truth' is joined with the 'sanctification of the Spirit,' 2 Thes. ii. 13; besides, ver. 20, all belief for the future was to be through the word, 'through their word.' Let me add another inference from this; what an excellent argument is this to plead in prayer, before you go to hear or read the word; Lord, was not this an article of agreement between thee and thy Son? Was not this the desire of our Saviour, who knew the best means of sanctifying?

[5.] It is necessary, by God's appointment, for all the degrees of the new birth, and all the appendixes to it. When God shows his own glory for a further change, he represents the species of it in the glass of the gospel: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.' It is the ministration of the Spirit in all the acts of the spirit. If the Spirit quicken, it is by some gospel precept; if it comforts, it is by some gospel promise; if it startles, it is by some threatening in the word. Whatsoever working there is in a Christian's heart, it is by some word or other dropping upon it. If any temptation which assaults us be baffled, it is by the word, which is the sword of the Spirit. The life of a Christian is made up of increasing light, refreshing comforts, choicer inclinations of the heart towards God. By the same law whereby the soul is converted the heart is rejoiced, and the eyes further enlightened: Ps. xix. 7, 8, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes.' The Spirit makes the word not only the fire to kindle the soul, but the bellows to blow; it is first life, then liveliness to the soul. It is through the word he begets us, and through the word he quickens us: Thy word has quickened me,' Ps. cxix. 50, 93. It is by the word God gathers a church in the world; by the same word he sanctifies it to greater degrees, Eph. v. 26. It is the seed whereby we are born, the dew whereby we are refreshed. As it is the seed of our birth, so it is the milk of our growth, 1 Peter ii. 2. Faith comes by hearing, and salvation after faith by the 'foolishness of preaching,' 1 Cor. i. 21. It helps us after we have believed through grace, Acts

xviii. 27. Our fruitfulness depends upon our plantation by this river's side. The influence of other ordinances depends upon it. Sacraments that nourish and increase, are not efficacious, but by virtue of the word; they have their dependence on the word, as seals upon the covenant. The word is operative without sacraments; sacraments are not operative without the influence of the word, they are only assistants to it. This quickens and increases habitual grace, as well as it was the instrument first to usher it into the heart: Eph. v. 26 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' As God will have the mediation of his Son honoured in the whole progress and perfection of grace as the meritorious cause, the efficacy of the Spirit as the efficient cause, so he will have the word in every step to heaven honoured as the instrumental cause; that as Jesus Christ is all in all, as the chief, so the word may be all in all as the means. As God created the world by the word of his power, and by the word of his providence bid the creatures increase and multiply, so by the word of the gospel he lays the foundation, and rears the building, of his spiritual house.

4. As it is not a natural instrument, but the only instrument appointed by God, and therefore, upon these and upon other accounts, a necessary instrument, so it is an instrument which makes mightily for God's glory. The meaner the appearance of the instrument, the more evident the power and skill of the workman. It would be miraculous for a man to raise up another from death, by a composition of medicines syringed down the throat, but a greater miracle to raise him by speaking a word. In the new birth there is nothing sensible to man but the word, the other causes are secret; like the wind, you know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes. The instrument being weak in itself, none can claim any share with God in the glory of the work. But were there a natural strength in the means, much of the honour would be pared from God, and assumed by the creature. It is like the trumpet in the right hand of Gideon's soldiers, and a pitcher with a lamp in the left. Upon the blowing of the trumpet and the breaking of the pitcher, the enemies fled; and God would have the means but small, but three hundred of thirty-two thousand, that Israel might not vaunt, and say, Mine own arm has saved me, Judges vii. 2. It had not been so admirable for Samson to have killed so many with a sword or spear, or if the walls of Jericho had fallen flat by the force of some battering engine; but it

was wonderful to see them tumble at the blast of ram's horns. Is it not the same to see strong-holds, high thoughts, Goliath-like corruptions, and spiritual death itself, fly before the voice of the word? To see a man like the Babel-builders, swelling and rearing up his own confidences against God, to have all the former language of his soul confounded by a word; to think of other objects, speak in another strain, descend from self to dust, deny pleasure, embrace a crucified Christ; that carnal reason should be silenced, legions of devils driven out, a messy Dagon fall before an ark of wood, that has nothing in it but the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna: in such weak means is the power of God exalted, and no other cry can reasonably be heard but 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' So it was more glorious for our Saviour to turn many of the Jews to him after his death than in his life, to bring them to believe by a Word, upon a person they had crucified as a malefactor, than if he had brought them to believe while he was attended with a train of miracles. The power of his miracles might seem in their eyes to be extinct with his death, since he that delivered others did not deliver himself from the hands of his murderers. He now honours both his own words and their faith, in bringing them to believe by the preaching of men, who did not believe by the Word from his lips, attended with the seals of so many glorious miracles.

5. Consider, as it is an instrument, so but an instrument. God begets by the word; the chief operation depends upon the Spirit of God. No sword can cut without a hand to manage it, no engine batter without a force to drive it. The Word is objective in itself, operative by the power of the Spirit; instrumental in itself, efficacious by the Holy Ghost. The Word of Christ is first spirit and then life. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,' John vi. 63. The word is the chariot of the Spirit, the Spirit the guider of the word; there is a gospel comes in word, and there is a gospel comes in power, 1 Thes. i. 5. There is a publishing of the gospel, and there is the 'fullness of the blessing of the gospel,' Rom. xv. 29. 'There was the truth of God spoken by Peter and Paul, and God in that truth working in the heart: Gal. ii. 8, 'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles.' The gospel in itself is like Christ's voice; the gospel with the Spirit is like Christ's power

raising Lazarus; other men might have spoken the same words, but the power of rising must come from above. It is then successful when an inward unction drops with the outward dew, when the veil is taken from the heart, and the curtain from the word, and both meet together, both word and heart; when Christ kisses with the kisses of his mouth, and the man embraces it with the affections of his heart. The light in the air is the instrument by which we read, but the principle of that light is in the sun in the heavens. The word is a rod, a breath, but efficacious in smiting and slaying the old man, as it is the rod of Christ's mouth, the breath of his lips, Isa. xi. 3; a rod like that of Moses to charm us, but as it is the rod of his strength, Ps. cx. 2; a weapon, but only 'mighty through God,' 2 Cor. x. 4; a seed, but brings not forth a plant but by the influence of the sun. The word has this efficacy from the bleeding wounds and dying groans of Christ. It is by making his soul an offering for sin that he sees the travail of his soul in his new born creatures. By his blood are all the promises of grace confirmed; by his blood they are operative. The word whereby we are begotten was appointed by God, confirmed by Christ, and the Spirit which begets us was purchased by the same blood. To conclude: the word declares Christ, and the Spirit excites the heart to accept him; the word shows his excellency, and the Spirit stirs up strong cries after him; the word declares the promises, and the Spirit helps us to plead them; the word administers reasons against our reasonings, and the Spirit edges them, the word shows the way, and the Spirit enables to walk in it; the word is the seed of the Spirit, and the Spirit the quickener of the word; the word is the graft, and the Spirit the engrafter; the word is the pool of water, and the Spirit stirs it to make it healing.

## II. Quest. How does the word work?

1. Objectively, as it is a declaration of God's will, as it does propose to the understanding what is to be known, in order to salvation hereafter and practice here, as it does declare the purpose of God to save only by Jesus Christ the Mediator, and by him to deliver us from sin, Satan, and whatsoever is contrary to everlasting happiness; and thus is significative of something to our minds and understandings. The Spirit gave us an eye to see, and the word is the light which discovers the object to the eye. The Spirit gives us an organ, but something must be proposed for that organ to exercise

itself about, otherwise there is no use of the understanding in any rational operation; which certainly there is, for though the object is supernatural, and the inward work upon the mind supernatural, yet the proposal of the object to the mind is made in a rational manner. The word does objectively propose life and death in a way suitable to the nature of man, that he may rationally choose life: 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life,' Deut. xxx. 19. Both the blessings of the gospel and the curses of the law are presented in the word, that the one may be chosen, the other avoided. The word is proposed under various notions: as *true*, and so it is the object of the speculative understanding; as *good*, so it is the object of the practical understanding and will; as *profitable*, so it is the object of the appetite and affections. When it is received into the speculative understanding, it is a preparation to the new birth; when it is received into the practical understanding and will, it is the new birth. It discovers the wonders in God's own heart, his Son, and his promise; the Spirit demonstrates it, and gives power to embrace it. It first presents the promise and then answers the pleas the stubborn heart makes against it, yet by the same gospel, it fetches demonstrative arguments from that quiver to satisfy a cavilling understanding, and motives from thence to overcome a resisting will, it silences the fears, points to the way, excites the soul to an acceptance of Christ, all by this gospel, and so draws us, as a man draws a child, by presenting some alluring object to him. The Spirit immediately himself touches the soul, but by the word, as an instrument proposing the object, and drawing out the soul into an actual believing. The two chief parts of the word are,

(1.) The discovery of our misery by nature. The heart is ripped open, our putrefied condition in our blood evidenced, our deplorable state unfolded, and thereby the conscience awakened to sensible reflections. It dissects the heart, discovers the secret reserves, unravels the thoughts, pursues sin to its fastnesses, and pulls and brings it out, as Joshua the kings to execution: 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' It opens sin to the very bowels, discovers the inward filth, takes off its beautiful disguise, its silken covering, and shows the running ulcer under it. It discovers the forlorn estate by nature, and the insufficiency of flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God.

Let the word be whispered by the Spirit in the ears of a ruffling sinner, and the curtains which obscured his sin from his eye drawn open, that he may see what a nest of devils he has, what astonishment will it raise in him! How will he stand amazed at his own folly! How will he loathe that self which before he so vehemently loved!

(2.) A second discovery is of the necessity and existence of another bottom. It discovers our misery by nature, and our remedy by Christ, the plague brought upon the world by the first Adam, the cure brought to the world by the second. It proclaims a peace, concluded between God and the humbled sinner, by his Son, the great ambassador, confirmed by his blood, assured by his resurrection. It shows him the fountain of death in his sin, the fountain of life in Christ, the free streams and gracious communications of it. The promise discovers the gracious nature of God, his kindness to man, the openness of his arms to receive him, and thus bring the soul off from itself to the foot of God and the bottom of the cross. When the word like fire and the heart like tinder come close together, the heart catches the spark and burns. From the word reconciliation and peace step out and meet the soul, it finds the kisses of Christ's mouth inspiring it with life, the box of the gospel promises broke open, the window of the gospel ark opened, and the dove flying out of it into the desert heart. The word proposes things as they are in reality, and the soul knows things as it ought to know, 1 Cor. viii. 2. It understands the unavoidable necessity and the infallible excellency of the things proposed; it sees the rocks and shelves wherein the danger lies, and a compass whereby to steer, a road wherein to lie safe at anchor; whereupon he relents for his sin, is astonished at divine kindness, rejoices at the promise as before he trembled at the threatening, and has far other thoughts of God than he had before, in which act divine life is breathed into the soul.

2. The word seems to have an active force upon the will, though the manner of it be very hard to conceive. It is operative in the hand of God for sanctification. The petition of our Saviour, John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,' seems to intimate more than a bare objective relation to this work; it both shows us our spots and cleanses them. It is a seed. Seed, though small, is active, no part of the plant retains a greater efficacy; all the

glory and strength of the plant, in its buds, blossoms, and fruit, are hidden in it. The word is this seed, which being settled in the heart by the power of the Spirit, brings forth this new creature. It is a glass that not only represents the image of God, but by the Spirit changes us into it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. A word that pierces the heart, Heb. iv. 12, ye, 'sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing asunder the soul and spirit.' It is a fire to burn. The Spirit does so edge the word that it cuts the quick, discerns the very thoughts, insinuates into the depths of the heart, and rakes up the small sands from the bottom, as a fierce wind does from the bowels of the sea. It is God's ordinance to batter down strongholds. Though it be not a natural instrument to work necessarily, yet it is likened to natural instruments, which are active under the efficiency of the agent which manages them; and this also, in the hands of the Spirit, works mighty effects. The 'sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth ' are joined together, one subordinate to another, 2 Thes. ii. 13. The Spirit efficiently infusing holy habits; the word objectively and actively—objectively, as outwardly proposed; actively, as inwardly engrafted;—it at least excites the new infused gracious principle, and produces our actual conversion and believing. As the pronouncing excommunication in the primitive times filled the person with terror; and no question but upon the same account the authoritative pronouncing the pardon of sin by the apostles, though only declarative, might have a mighty operation upon the soul in filling it with joy; yet both, as managed by the Spirit, concurring with his own ordinance. So that the word is mighty in operation as well as clear in representation; for an activity seems to be ascribed to it by the Scripture metaphors. The chief activity of it is seen in that likeness which it produces in the soul to itself. Seeds have an efficacious virtue to produce plants of the same kind with that whose seeds they are; so the word produces qualities in the heart like itself. The law in the heart is the law in the word transcribed in the soul; a graft which changes a crabbed stock into a sweet tree, James i. 21; like a seal it leaves a likeness and impression of itself; it works a likeness to God as he is revealed in the gospel, for we are changed into the same image. What image? The same image which we behold in that glass, 2 Cor. iii. 18; not his essential image, but the image of his glory represented in the gospel for our imitation. The word is the glory of God in a glass, and imprints the image of the

glory of God in the heart. It is a softening word, and produces a mollified heart; an enlightening word, and causes an enlightened soul; a divine word, and engenders a divine nature; it is a spiritual word, and produces a spiritual frame; as it is God's will, it subdues our will; it is a sanctifying truth, and so makes a sink of sin to become the habitation of Christ. To conclude: this is certain: the promise in the word breeds principles in the heart suitable to itself; it shows God a father, and raises up principles of love and reverence; it shows Christ a mediator, and raises up principles of faith and desire. Christ in the word conceives Christ in the heart; Christ in the word, the beginning of grace, conceives Christ in the soul, the hope of glory.

### III. The Use. 1. Information.

1. How admirable, then, is the power of the gospel! It is a quickening word, not a dead; a powerful word, not a weak; a sharp-edged word, not dull; a piercing word, not cutting only skin deep, Heb. iv. 12. That welcome work does it make, when a door of utterance and a door of entrance are both opened together! It has a mighty power to out-wrestle the principalities of hell, and demolish the strongholds of sin in the heart. It is a word of which it may be said, as the psalmist of the sun, Ps. xix. 6, 'His circuit is to the ends of the earth, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' To part of the soul is hidden from a new birth by the warm beams of it, when directed by God to the soul. What a powerful breath is that which can make a dead man stand upon his feet and walk! If you should find your faces, by looking in a glass, transformed into an angelical beauty, would you not imagine some strange and secret virtue in that glass? How powerful is this gospel word, which changes a beast into a man, a devil into an angel, a clod of earth into a star of heaven!

(1.) It is above the power of all moral philosophy The wisdom of the heathens never equalled the gospel in such miracles; the political government of the best states never made such alterations in the hearts of men. How excellent is that gospel which has done that for the renewing of millions of souls, which all the wit and wisdom of the choicest philosophers could never effect upon one heart! All other lectures can do no more than allay the passions, not change them; bring them into an order fit for human society, not beget them

for a divine fellowship; not draw them forth out of a principle of love to God, and fix them upon so high an end as the glory of God that is invisible. This is the glorious begetting by the gospel, which enables not only to moral actions, but inspires with divine principles and ends, and makes men highly delight in the ways they formerly abhorred. What are a few sprinklings of changes moral philosophy has wrought in the lives of men, to the innumerable ones the gospel has wrought, which were such undeniable realities, that they were never openly contradicted by any of the most violent persecutors of the Christian religion, and were always the most urged argument for the truth of the gospel in the ancient apologies for it? How long may we read and hear mere moral discourses, and arrive no higher than some reformation of life, with unchanged hearts: have sin beaten from the outworks, yet retain the great fort, the heart!

(2.) Above the power of the law. The natural law sees not Christ, the Mosaical law dimly shows him afar off; the gospel brings him near, to be embraced by us, and us to be divinely changed by him. The natural law makes the model and frame of a man, the Mosaical adds some colours and preparations, and the gospel conveys spirit into them. The natural law begets us for the world, the Mosaical kills us for God, and the gospel raises up to life. The natural law makes us serve God by reason, the Mosaical by fear, and the gospel by love. It is by this, and not by the law, those three graces which are the main evidences of life are settled in the soul. It begets faith, whereby we are taken off from the stock of Adam, and inserted in Christ; hope, whereby we flourish; and love, whereby we fructify. By faith, we have life; by hope, strength; by love, liveliness and activity. All these are the fruits of the gospel administration.

(3.) Its power appears in the subjects it has been instrumental to change. Souls bemired in the filthiest lusts, have been made miraculously clean; it has changed the hands of rapine into instruments of charity, hearts full of filth into vessels of purity; it has brought down proud reason to the obedience of faith, and made active lusts to die at the foot of the cross; it has struck off Satan's chains, and snatched away his captives into the liberty of God's service; it has changed the most stubborn hearts. The conversion of a great company of those Jewish priests that were most violent against it and the author of it, is ascribed to the power of the word:

Acts vi. 7, 'And the word of God increased, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.' How many were raised to life by Peter's sermon! More souls turned than words spoken upon record. It subdues the will, which cannot be conquered but by its own consent. Light can dart in upon the understanding whether a man will or no, and flash in his face though he keep it in unrighteousness. Conscience will awaken and rouse them, though men use all the arts they can to still it. The will cannot be forced to any submission against its own consent; the power of the gospel is seen in the conquest of the will, and putting new inclinations into that.

(4.) The power of it is seen in the suddenness of its operation. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like the change at the last resurrection: 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 'We shall all be changed, in a moment, at the last trumpet.' How have troops of unmastered lusts fled at the voice of the gospel trumpet, like a flock of frightened birds, and left their long-possessed mansion! How have the affections, which have sheltered so many enemies against God, been on the sudden weary of their residence, and abhorred what they loved, and loved what the moment before they abhorred! How have welcome temptations been upon this sudden change rejected, a despised Saviour dearly embraced, a furious soul tamed, a darling self crucified, and a soul open to every temptation strongly fortified against it! How frequent are the examples, in the first times of Christianity, of men that have been almost as bad as devils one day, one hour, and joyful martyrs the next; and as soon as ever they have been begotten by it, asserted the power of it in another new birth by flames!

(5.) And this has been done many times by one part, one particle of the word. One word of the gospel, a single sentence, has erected a heavenly trophy in a soul, which all the volumes of the choicest mere reason could never erect; one plain scripture has turned a face to heaven that never looked that way before, and made a man fix his eye there against his carnal interest. One plain scripture has killed a man's sins, and quickened his heart with eternal life; one word of Christ, remembered by Peter, made him weep bitterly, and two or three scriptures, pressed by the same Peter upon his hearers, pricked their hearts to the quick. How has hell flashed in the face of a sinner,

out of a small cloud of a threatening, and heaven shot into the soul from one little diamond spark of a promise! A little seed of the word, like a grain of mustard seed, changed the soul from a dwarfish to a tall stature! This the experience of every eye can testify.

(6.) And this power appears in the simplicity of it. Savonarola observes, that when he neglected the preaching of the Scripture, and applied himself to discourses of philosophy, he gained little upon the hearts of people; but when he came to illustrate and explain the Scripture, the minds of people were wonderfully inflamed and excited to a serious flame; and that when he discoursed in a philosophical manner, there was a non-attention, not only of the more ignorant, but the more learned sort too; but when he preached Scripture truths, he found the minds of men mightily delighted, sting with divine truth, brought to compunction, and a reformation of their lives, which shows, says he, the power of the word, acting more vigorously than all human reason in the world. And indeed Scripture, and Scripture reason, is the wisdom of God; all other reason is the wisdom of man. God will depress man's wisdom and advance his own. It works as it is 'the word of God which lives and abides for ever', 1 Peter i. 23. To wrap a fine piece of silk about a sword, or gild a diamond, is to hinder the edge of the one, and the lustre of the other.

2. Information. The gospel is then certainly of divine authority, since in this 'God has set a tabernacle for the Sun of righteousness to move in, as the heavens are the tabernacle for the material sun, Ps. xix. 4. That word that raises the dead, must needs be the word of no less than God. Our Saviour's discovery of men's thoughts argued his deity. The word's discovery of the inward workings of the heart, and the alteration it makes there, evidences a divine stamp upon it. God would never have made a lie so successful in the world, or blessed it in making those alterations in men, so comely in the eye of moral nature, so advantageous to human society, as the principles it instils into the minds of men are. A lie would never have been blessed to be an instrument of so much virtue and truth; it would not consist with the righteousness of God's government, or his goodness and truth as governor, to bring the hearts of men into so beautiful an order by a deceitful gospel. What word ever had such trophies! What engine ever battered so many strongholds! If the lame walk by

the strength of it, if the dead are raised by the power of it, if lepers are cleansed by the virtue of it, if impure souls are sanctified, dead souls enlivened, are we to question its divine authority? Should a word work such wonderful effects for so many ages, that had no stamp of divine authority upon it? Would all those witnesses be given by God to a mere imposture? Let the victories it has gained evidence the arm that wields it. What sword was used at the first conquest of the world through grace, but this of the Spirit? How soon was the devil, with all his heap of idols, fain to fly before it! How soon was the devil, with all his pack of lusts, forced to leave his habitation in the hearts of men! Is not that of divine authority that so routs the enemies of God, puts sin to flight, expels spiritual death, breaking the bands of that worst king of terrors; that had skill to find out sin in its lurking holes, and power to dispossess that, and introduce spiritual life into the soul? Can that be a thing less than divine, that restores man to his due place as a creature respecting his Creator, referring all things to his glory; that implants the love, fear, hope of God in the mind; that makes man, of a miserable corrupt creature, to become divine; that roots out the vices of hell, and stores the soul with the virtues of heaven? Can such a gospel be termed less than a divine word of truth? If there be any word that can so change the nature, and transform wolves into lambs, let it have the honour and due praise when it is found out; but whatsoever the atheism of the world is, that never felt the powerful efficacy of it, you surely that have felt it a mighty weapon to conquer the devils that once possessed you, and an instrument to new beget you when you lay in your blood, should entertain no whisper against the divine authority of it, but count it the power and wisdom of God as, indeed, it is in itself, and in its effects upon souls, Rom. i. 16. It is said there to be 'the power of God to salvation.' Upon that account the apostle was not ashamed of it; neither should we, but conclude as the same apostle says, 'If I be not an apostle, yet to you I am an apostle.' So if the gospel be not in itself the gospel of God, surely it is so to you who have been renewed.

3. Information. It shows us the reason why the gospel is so much opposed by Satan in the world. It begets those for heaven whom he had begotten for hell. It pulls down his image and sets up God's; it pulls the crown off his head, the sceptre from his hand, snatches subjects from his empire, straitens his territories, and demolishes his

forts, breaks his engines, outwits his subtilty, makes his captives his conquerors, and himself, the conqueror, a captive; it pulls men 'out of the kingdom of darkness, and translates them into a kingdom of light,' Col. i. 13. And all this, as it is a word of truth, opposed to his word of deceit, whereby he has cheated mankind and deceived the nations; that we may well say of him, as the apostle of death, 'O death, where is thy sting?' 1 Cor. xv. 55. O hell, where is thy sting? O Satan, where is thy victory? This slays Satan and revives the soul.

4. We see then how injurious they are to God, who would obstruct the progress of the gospel in the world; that, as the papists, would hinder the reading and the preaching of the word. Whose seed are they, but the seed of that dragon, that would as well hinder the new birth as devour a divine-begotten babe 'as soon as ever it were born,' Rev. xii. 4. Such would hinder the greatest and most excellent work of God upon the souls of men, would have no spiritual generations for God in the world. Such envy Christ a seed, and God a family, they would despoil him of a family on earth, though they cannot of a family in heaven. In banishing the word, they would banish the grace of God out of the world, and leave no place in a world drowned with ignorance, where this dove should set her foot. Those that would take away the seed, would not have a spiritual harvest, but reduce souls to a deplorable famine, lock them up in the grave, and keep them under the bands of a spiritual death.

5. It informs us, that the gospel shall then endure in the world, as long as God has any to beget. Men may puff at it, but they cannot extinguish it, it is a word of truth, and truth is mighty, and will prevail. It was a mighty wind wherein the Spirit came upon the apostles, to show not only the quick and speedy progress of the gospel, as upon the wings of the wind, but the mighty force of it, that men can no more silence the sound of the gospel than they can the blustering of the wind. It shall prevail in all places, where God has a seed to bring in, a people to beget. Those given to Christ shall come from far: 'from the east,' Isa. xlix. 12, 'and from the west, and from the land of Sinim' (now, I think, called Damiata, in Egypt). The word, being the instrument, shall sound everywhere, where he has sons and daughters to beget for Christ. As long as Christ does retain his royalty, 'his mouth shall be a sharp sword,' Isa. xlix. 2. That is the first thing concluded on between God and Christ, before they

come to any further treaty, which is expressed in that chapter. As Christ shall be his salvation to the ends of the earth, so shall the word be the instrument of it to the end of the world: the 'polished shaft' is 'hid in his quiver.' As he is a light to the Gentiles, so the golden candlestick of this gospel wherein this light is set, shall endure in spite of men and devils. Since his promise of a seed to Christ stands sure, the word, whereby he begets a generation for him, is as sure as the promise, and shall not return void: Isa. lv. 11, 'but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the things whereto he sent it.' Never fear then the removal of the gospel out of the world, though it be removed out of a particular place, since it is a word of truth, and an instrument ordained to so glorious an end.

6. It is a sign, then, God has some to beget, when he brings his gospel to any place. He has a pleasure to accomplish, and it shall not return unto him void. Prosperity is entailed upon it for the doing the work whereto he sent it. Since then it is appointed an instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for a new begetting, it will be efficacious upon some souls where it comes, for the wise God would not send it, but to attain its main end upon some hearts. God never sends his word to any place, but it is received and relished by some as the savour of life. It looses the bands of spiritual death in some, and binds them harder upon obstinate sinners, to them that perish it is the savour of death. In every place the gospel was savoury to some: 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15, 'God made manifest the savour of his knowledge,' by the apostles, 'in every place.' Wherever this seed is sown, the harvest has been reaped, either more or less. It is fruitful at Corinth, for there God had much people, Acts xviii. 10. It is not fruitless at Athens, though the harvest was less; most mocked, but some believed, and but one man of learning and worldly wisdom, Acts xvii. 32, 34. When God sends John in a way of righteousness, if the Pharisees believe not, God will make a conquest of publicans and harlots: Mat. xxi. 32, 'John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you believed not: but the publicans and harlots believed him.' The net of the gospel is not cast wholly in vain, but from the time of its coming, to the time of its removal, some souls have been caught, though not of the most delicious fish, yet of the worst sort.

7. It informs us, what an excellent thing is a new birth! The end

is more desirable than the means, this is the chief end of all the ordinances of God in the world. The gospel had never been revealed but for this intent, this is the 'design of the Spirit's operation in any gospel administration. All the lines of the word are to draw the lineaments of grace in the heart. This must be a noble and excellent thing, for which chiefly the oracles of God sound in the world, for which so great a light is set up in the gospel. All the love of Christ breathes in the gospel; the whole Testament is sealed by his blood; the perpetual workings of the Holy Ghost, the preaching of the word, the celebration of the sacraments, are in subservience to this end, the one to make us live, the other to make us grow. How inconceivably excellent is that, how valuable in the eye of God, how advantageous to the happiness of men, that is, the design wherein so many divine operations meet!

8. What a lamentable thing is it, that so few should be new begotten by the word of truth! How many are there among us that understand not what a new begetting and birth is, no more than Nicodemus when he discoursed with our Saviour! What a deplorable thing is it that the word should be preached, and so little regarded! that not only an hour's, but many years' discourses should pass away (as the Psalmist speaks of our lives) 'like a tale that is told!' Ps. xc. 9. How miserable is that man that has the objective cause of the new birth, without the effective! It is the word of truth. What will become of you, if you prefer a word of error before it; if you prefer the devil's killing suggestions before God's reviving, oracles? What does the word of truth move you to, but to a new birth? Why will any man struggle against it? Every resistance of the word is a resistance of God himself. It is God hews by the prophets, Hos. vi. 5; it is God offers to beget by the word; every reluctance then against the word is a reluctance against God. The word will either bring in a new form of grace, or a new form of torment. If the working of the one be rejected, the in-working of the other cannot be avoided; it will either cut the bands of a spiritual death, or cut the sinews of our souls. That piece of timber that has not its knots cut off for the building, shall be cut in pieces for the fire. A new life waits for them that obey the gospel; an endless death for them that reject it; they that obey not the gospel, know not God, 2 Thess. i. 8. And what is reserved for such, but revenging flames in another world? It would be happy for such, that they had never heard of a

renewing gospel. Every gospel discourse that might have been the cause of a spiritual life, and a divine cordial, if sucked in, rejected, will be a bitter drug in that potion which shall be drunk in an eternal fever.

9. Hereby you may examine whether you are new begotten. It is the word of truth whereby God befits. In this word he opens the glory of his grace, and through this he conveys the power of his grace. The conquests of Christ were to be made by the word, and it was so settled at the first constitution of him as Mediator and Redeemer: Isa. xlix. 2, 'He has made my mouth like a sharp sword.' It was by this the hearts of men were to be conquered. And what heart is not subdued by the sword of his mouth, is not subdued by the power of his arms. Some word or other was the instrument to beget you (I speak of people grown up). The apostle's interrogation is a strong negative. There is no believing without hearing, Rom. x. 14. Hearing goes before believing; he lays it down as a certain conclusion from his former arguing: 'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' If you conclude yourselves new begotten, how came you by it? Is it by the word, or no? That is God's ordinary means. If you be not renewed by this, it is not likely you are renewed at all; no other instrument has God ordinarily appointed to this end. Afflictions may plough men for it, but the word is the only seed that renews the face of the earth. All false notions or presumptions of the new birth must be brought to this touchstone; it is a misshapen and monstrous birth, that is not by a seed of the same kind; the law in the heart has no seed of the same nature with it to engender it, but the law in the word, that word which we properly call gospel; the word of truth, not the word of philosophy, which is a word of uncertainty; God's word, not Plato's word. If a thousand beasts had been consumed by common fire, not one of them had been an holocaust, a grateful sacrifice, unless consumed by the fire of the altar which came down from heaven. Moral wisdom is not that fire, has not that eminent descent from heaven; it is not that speech from heaven whereby our Saviour is said yet to speak, Heb. sit. 26. A little spark kindled by the voice of Christ from heaven, from whence he yet speaks in the gospel, is more worth than all the bonfires in the world, kindled by the sparks of moral wisdom. Those qualifications which grow of their own accord, without the word, are like the herbs which sprout in wild

places without any tillage, which are of a different kind than what are planted and watered in a garden, and overlooked by the care of man. If your dispositions you boast of were not planted by the word, how fair soever they may look, they are but a wild kind of fruit; therefore, it concerns you to look back upon yourselves, think what word it was whereby you were begotten. If no particular word can be remembered, if your regeneration were wrought insensibly in your younger years, examine what suitableness there is between the word and your souls, whether your hearts are turned into the nature of it. The measures of grace are according to the measures of the word. If you cannot remember the first glorious entrance of it, you must see for the rich dwelling of it. An inhabitant may enter into our houses unseen, but he cannot dwell there without our knowledge; the lines of the word will be seen in the heart, though the particular pencil whereby they were wrought may not be remembered.

10. It instructs ministers how to preach. It is the word of truth, the gospel, that must be the main matter of our preaching; and those things in the gospel that have the greatest tendency to the new begetting men, and working this great change in them, and driving it on to greater maturity. The instrument of conversion is not barely the letter of the word, but the sense and meaning of it, rationally impressed upon the understanding, and closely applied to the conscience. The opening the word is the life of it, and the true means of regeneration. If any man would turn his servant or child from a course of sin, would he discourse to them of the nature of the sun and stars, their magnitude, motions, numbers, and qualities? This would be nothing to the purpose; his way would be to show them the deformity and danger of their sin. The word of truth is God's instrument, and it should be ours; what is the end of the word, should be the end of our preaching. It was through the gospel the apostle begot the Corinthians; not that the preaching of the law is excluded, but it must be preached in order to the gospel as a preparation to it. Whatsoever in the word of truth does prepare for the new birth, produce it, cherish it, preserve it, centre in one and the same end. How careful and industrious should we be to beget children to God, that we may present them, and say, 'Here am I, and the children, which thou hast given me.' The new birth will be your joy, and crown and you will be ours, 1 Thess. ii. 19,20. Aaron's sons are called the generations of Moses, as well as Aaron, Num. iii. 1,

though none of his natural sons are reckoned; Aaron's by natural generation, Moses' perhaps by a spiritual regeneration and instruction.

## Use 2. Of exhortation.

1. Highly glorify God for the word of truth, which is so great an instrument. How thankful should we be for an intention, to secure our estates from consuming, houses from burning, bodies from dying! The gospel, the word of truth, does much more than this: it is an instrument to beget a soul for God; an instrument whereby God makes himself our Father, and us his children. It is but an instrument; let not the glory be given to the instrument, but to the agent. As it is an instrument, let it have part of your affections, but nothing of the glory that belongs to God; love the truth, but glorify and bless the God of truth, that has ordained it to be so excellent an instrument.

(1.) Bless God in your hearts. [1.] That ever you had the word of truth made known to you. How many millions sit in a spiritual darkness, without so much as the means of a new begetting! Millions never heard the sound of it, nor ever will. [2.] Much more that it has been successful to any of you. Have you any thing in your spirits that bears witness to the truth of it? When you read or hear it, do you find something of kin to it in your souls, and feel something within you rise up and call it blessed? How should you read and hear it, with eruptions of thankfulness to God for it, hearty embraces for it, and fervent ejaculations to God to work more in you by the power of it! Why has the word grappled with any of our souls, and not with others; arrested any of you in a course of sin, and left others to walk in their own ways, to ran down silently like the streams of a river, till swallowed up in an ocean of death? The apostle Paul heard the voice, others with him only a sound of words, Acts ix. 9, 7, xxii. 9; some have heard a sound of words, without the voice of God in it, while others have heard a divine voice in a human sound. The wind has blown upon many, God in that wind only upon few; some have received air, whilst others have received Spirit and life; some have only the body of the word, while others feel the spirit and power of it in their hearts. Shall not God be glorified for this? Had it not been for him, and his Spirit, words had been only words and wind to all as well as to some.

(2.) Glorify God in your lives. As you feel the power of it in your hearts, let others see the brightness and efficacy of it in your actions. The new born creature should principally aim at the glory of God, since the instrument whereby he is begotten was first published for the 'glory of God in the highest,' Luke ii. 14. What is produced by the efficacy of such an instrument must have the same end, viz. the glory of God in the practice of holiness. A holy gospel imprinted can never leave the heart and life unholy. A gospel coined for the glory of God, when wrought in the heart, can never suffer the soul to aim chiefly at self; but at the great end for which the gospel was first discovered. The gospel of holiness and truth in the heart will engender sincerity and holiness in the life.

2. Prize the word of truth, which works such great effects in the soul. Value that as long as you live, which is the cord whereby God has drawn any of you out of the dungeon of death. Never count that foolishness by which God has inspired you with the choicest wisdom, and never count that weakness which has made any of you of death, living; and of darkness, light; and of miserable, happy by grace. If a soul be worth a world, and therefore to be prized, how precious ought that to be which is an instrument to let a soul for the felicity of another world! How should the law of God's mouth be better to us than thousands of gold and silver! Ps. cxix. 72. How should we prize that word whereby any of us have seen the glory of God in his sanctuary, the glory of God in our souls! When corruptions are strong, it is an engine to batter them; when our hearts are hard, it is a hammer to break them; when our spirits are impostumated, it is a sword to cut them; when our hearts are cold, it is a fire to inflame them; when our souls are faint, it is a cordial to refresh them, it begins a new birth and maintains it. It is the seed from whence we spring, 1 Peter i. 23, the glass wherein we see the glory of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18. By the waters of the sanctuary, we have both meat for nourishment, and medicines for cure, from the tree that grows by its streams: Ezek. xlvii. 12, 'The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine.' Have a great regard to it, keep it in the midst of your hearts, for it is life, Prov. iv. 21, 22.

3. Pray and endeavour for the preservation and success of the word of truth. Were there a medicine that could preserve life, how chary should we be in preserving that? The gospel is the tree, whose

leaves cure the nations, Rev. xxii. 2. It was a blessing God ended the creatures with, when he bid them increase and multiply, Gen. i. 22. It was an evidence that he intended to preserve the world. If the gospel get ground in the hearts of men, it is an evidence it shall continue in spite of the oppositions of men or devils.

4. Wait upon God in the word. Where there is a revelation on God's part, there must be a hearing on ours. Sit down therefore at the feet of God, and receive of his words, Dent. xxxiii. 3. (1.) Despise it not; he that contemns it never intends to be new begotten, since he slights the means of God's appointment; he that intends an end, will use all means proportionately to his desires for that end; he that contemns it never was renewed. Habitual grace being wrought by it, cannot, but in its own nature, have a great affection to it. He that loves Christ cannot but love all the methods of his operations. (2.) Despise it not because it is but an instrument: say not, because God is the chief agent, therefore you need not come to the word. Our Saviour knew that 'man did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,' Mat. iv. 4. Did he therefore neglect means for preserving his life? Because God gives the increase, should not the husbandman plough and sow? If God does not work upon you by the means, you can have no rational hopes he will do it any other way. What though ministers can only speak to the ear? John Baptist could do no more, whose ministry was notwithstanding glorious, in being the forerunner of Christ. To neglect it, therefore, is to double-bar your hearts against the entrance of grace, and slight the truth which Christ brought down from the bosom of God.

(1.) Never did God appoint any other way but this. Miracles were never appointed but as attendants upon this. Miracles come after teachings in the great gifts to the church, 1 Cor. xii. 7-10. First, the 'manifestation of the Spirit,' the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge,' then 'gifts of healing and miracles.' Miracles are ceased, as being not absolutely necessary; but the ministry of the word will last to the end of the world. By the prophets God brings souls out of a state of bondage, and by the prophets he preserves them in a state of grace: Hosea xii. 13, 'By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.' Miracles and the resurrection of one from the dead, was never

appointed under the legal administration, but Moses and the prophets, Luke xvi. 13. These were the ordinary means, and if these did not work, miracles were inefficacious.

(2.) God never made any promise but in this way. God promised to circumcise their hearts to love him with all their soul, but in the way of hearing his voice, and observing his statutes, Deut. xxx 6, 10, 11. He meets souls only that remember him in his way, Isa. lxiv. 5. And to the preaching of the gospel only, our Saviour promised his presence to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20; the promise is perpetually and immovably throughout all ages of the world fixed to this command. The promising his presence to the preaching of the gospel, implies that his presence shall be enjoyed only by attendance on the gospel. The gracious workings of the Spirit are by this, they are the words of Christ brought to remembrance by him, whereby he does so mightily operate.

(3.) No other way did God apparently work by formerly. In the time when God did especially manifest himself to his people by visions, dreams, and apparitions of angels, and in those days made revelations to them, he converted not any either from a state of nature, or from a particular fall, but by the word. Manasseh's conversion was by the word of the seers, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18; nor was David reclaimed after his fall by an immediate vision, but by the ministry of Nathan; Peter by a look, which revived the word spoken to him, Luke xxii. 61. The angel that attended the eunuch, Acts viii. 26, made no impressions upon him, but was ordered to direct Philip thither to explain to him the mystery of the gospel; and the Spirit particularly orders him to go near the chariot, ver. 29, but makes no impression upon him but by the ministry of the word. An angel is sent to direct Philip, but Philip is sent to discover Christ. An angel is sent to Cornelius, not to preach the gospel, but to direct him where to send for a teacher, Acts x. 3, 5, 6, the Spirit prepares Peter to go, verse 19, 20, and likewise prepares Cornelius for his reception; God prepares the jailer by an earthquake, but renews him not but by the ministry of Paul, Acts xvi. 26, 32. In the times of the gospel there was first to be a teaching of God's law, before a walking in his paths, Isa. iii. 3. The arm that made heaven and earth makes the new heart and new spirit, but by a word as well as them. The net of the gospel is only appointed to catch the fish, though the

fish that had the tribute-money in its mouth was immediately for the service of Christ, yet he would not use his power to bring it to the shore, without Peter's casting out the net. Christ first brings souls to the net, and by the net to himself.

(4.) God has always blessed this more or less. Moses' rod in Moses his hand has brought miracles, Christ's rod in the Spirit's hand has wrought greater; the new creations have been always by it, and the after-breathings of the Spirit through it. By this he makes men righteous, holy, sincere, in a way of eminency, as the morning light which increases to a perfect day, and no longer as a morning cloud which quickly vanishes, Hosea vi. 5, which some understand of a gospel promise mixed with that discourse. How has the light of the beauty and excellency of God, flashing upon the understanding from the glass of the gospel, filled the will and affections of many with desire and love to that glory it represents, and that state it offers! The very leaves of it, the profession has healed nations, and brought human societies into order, and the fruit of it has been the cure of many a soul. Wait therefore for the falling of this fruit. Grace is a beam from the Sun of righteousness, but darted through the medium of gospel air; a pearl engendered by the blood of Christ, but only in the gospel sea. It has not been without its blessing to others, it has raised men from death to life. Is the virtue of the seed expired? or the strength of the Lord grown feeble? If ever therefore you could have the image of God in inward impressions of grace, and outward expressions of holiness, you must look for your transformation in and by the gospel. All the other knowledge in the world cannot give a man a right notion of the new birth, much less produce it. Look not after enthusiasms, nor expect it in new ways, 'to the law and to the testimony,' ways of God's appointment. The Jews could not expect an angel to bring them soundness of limbs, but by the pool; nor we the Spirit to infuse grace into us, but by the word. It is from the mercy-seat only God speaks to Israel; wisdom's gates are the places where to expect her alms, Prov. viii. 34. Wait therefore upon the word, Herein the Spirit of God travails with souls.

Quest. How shall we wait upon the Lord, so as that we may be new begotten by it?

1. Wait upon the word frequently. Be often in reading and hearing, and meditating on it. Men set upon these works as if they

were afraid they should be new born too soon, or prejudiced in their concerns and contentments in the world, as if they feared the mighty wind of the Spirit should blow away their beloved dross too fast, as if it were a matter of indifference to be like their Maker. If you had gold not thoroughly refined, would you not cast it again and again into the fire? If filth not wholly purged, would you not use the fountain again and again? Those that are in the sun are coloured and heated by it, and have things more visible; those that are much in the word, see more of the wonders, feel more of the warmth, receive deeper impressions, are endued with the grace and holiness of truth, have a purer flame in their affections for heaven. How do you know but an opportunity missed, might have been the best market? How do you know but the Spirit might have joined himself to the word, as Philip to the eunuch's chariot, while he was reading? 'While Peter yet spake those words (it is said), the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word,' Acts x. 44. What words? Even the marrow of the gospel, ver. 43, 'that through his name, whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.' God may have a portion ready for us, and we go without it, because we are not ready to receive it. We must not expect a raven to bring us food upon a bed of sluggishness. Do it the rather, because you may live to see such times, wherein Bibles may be as much shut as they are now open, wherein (as in former times) you may be willing to give a large parcel of your goods for one chapter of it. We read of some that have given a load of hay for one chapter of St James. Be frequent in waiting upon the word.

2. Let your hearts be fixed upon that which is the great end of the word. New begettings are the end of the gospel. Come, then, with minds fixed upon this end, and desires for it. Regard it not as a mere sound of words, but as an instrument of the noblest operations in the soul. If this be the great work of the gospel, we ought to read and hear it, with desires to be enlivened where we are dead, quickened where we are dull, be made new creatures where we are yet but old, taller creatures where we are yet but of a low stature; not only to have our understandings instructed, but our hearts changed; to inquire after God to behold the beauty of the Lord, Ps. xxvii. 4, that we may be transformed into it; to look for God, who is in the word of a truth, for the kingdom of God comes nigh to you in the gospel. That was that word that Christ, when he sent his disciples

out first to preach, bid them speak unto men, Luke xii. Men usually get more than they come to seek. He that goes to market, intending only to lay out his money upon some trifle, returns for the most part with no better commodity. Zacchaeus got upon the tree to meet with Christ, and so noble an end wanted not an excellent success: that day came salvation into his house, Luke xix. 9. When the Jews did not mind the end of sacrifices, and regarded not the things God principally looked for in them, God slighted them, and they went without any divine operations upon their souls by them, Isa. i. 11, 18, 14. When our ends suit the gospel, then are we like to feel gospel influences. We come with wrong ends, and, therefore, return with unchanged hearts; we come for a sound, and go away with no more. One end therefore in coming should be to gain this new begetting, or increase the growth of the new creature; our ends are not else conformable to the ends of God in it; therefore, as the earth sucks in the rain, and the roots in the earth attract it unto themselves that they may bring forth fruit, so should we open our hearts to receive the showers of the word with an aim at a new birth, or a further growth. As this is *finis operis*, so it should be *finis operantis*.

3. Mind the word in the simplicity of it, and that in it which tends to that end. Some men are more taken with colours than truth, more enamoured with words than matter, fill themselves only with air, and neglect the substance. Such are like those that are pleased with the colours of the rainbow, more than with the light reflected, or the covenant of God represented by it. No man is renewed by phrases and fancies; those are only as the oil to make the nails of the sanctuary drive in the easier: in Eccles. xii. 11, 'Acceptable words,' joined with 'words of truth,' are as the 'fastening of the nails,' both 'given by one shepherd.' Words there must be to make things intelligible; illustrations to make things delightfully intelligible, but the seminal virtue lies not in the husk and skin, but in the kernel; the rest dies, but the substance of the seed lives, and brings forth fruit; separate, therefore, between the husk and the seed. The word does not work as it is elegant, but as it is divine, as it is a word of truth. Illustrations are but the ornaments of the temple, the glory of it is in the ark and mercy-seat. It is not the engraving upon the sword cuts, but the edge; nor the key, as it is gilded, opens, but as fitted to the wards. Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5. It is the juice of the meat, and not the

garnishings of the dish, that nourishes. Was it the word as a pleasant song, or as a divine seed, that changed the souls of old, made martyrs smile in the midst of flames? It was the knowledge of the excellency of the promise, and not worldly eloquence, made them with so much courage slight gibbets, stakes, executioners; they had learned the truth as it is in Jesus.

4. Mind the word as the word of truth. Take it not upon the account of persons, value it for its own sake, as it is a word of truth. It is neither Paul nor Apollos, but God that gives the increase. Value it not by men; it is no matter what the pipe is, whether gold or lead, so the water be the water of life; the word has an edge, because it is the word of God, not because it is whetted upon this or that grindstone. Some will scarce receive a truth, but from one they fancy; as if a man should be so foolish as to refuse a medicine which will preserve his life, because it is not presented to him in a glass which he has a particular esteem of. To receive or refuse any truth upon the account of the person, is a sign of carnality, and the way to remain carnal; upon this account the apostle pronounces the Corinthians again and again carnal, 1 Cor. iii. 4. Despise not the meanest instrument. Our Saviour in his agony was comforted by an angel, much more inferior to him who was the Lord of angels, than any minister can be to a hearer. Mr Peacock, being fellow of a college, in great despair, when some minister had been discoursing with him, and prevailing nothing, offering to pray with him, No, says he; dishonour not God so much, as to pray for such a reprobate. A young scholar of his standing by, answered, Surely a reprobate could not be so tender of God's honour; which cords prevailed more to the bringing him to believe than all that the other had spoken. When men turn their backs upon the word, because the mouth does not please them, they turn their backs upon God, John xiii. 20, and perhaps upon their own mercy. When any have respect to the man more than the word, God will leave them to the operation of the man, and withdraw his own.

5. Attend upon the word with an eye to God. Look not for the new birth only from the word. It was the folly of the Jews to think to find life in the Scriptures without Christ; life in the letter, without the original of life, John v. 39, 40. 'Except the Lord build the house' (that is the temple), 'they labour in vain that build it,' Ps. cxxvii. 1.

Without God all our endeavours to build a spiritual temple are like the strivings to wash a blackamore white. No believing the word, though preached a thousand times, without God's revealing his arm, Isa. liiii. 1. It is not the file that makes the watch, but the artist by it. No instrument can act without the virtue of some superior agent. It is the altar that sanctifies the gold, and Christ that sanctifies the ordinances. Paul may plant by his doctrine and miracles; Apollos may water by his affectionate eloquence; but God alone can give the increase by his almighty breath. Man sows the seed, but God only can make it fructify. The richest showers cannot make the ground fruitful, but as instruments under God's blessing. It is not said the prophets did hew them, but God by his prophets, Hosea vi. 5. Then have your eyes fixed upon God. It is the word of his lips, not of man's, whereby any are snatched out of the paths of the destroyer, as well as kept from them. Man's teachings direct us to Christ; God's teachings bring us to Christ; man brings the gospel, at most, to the heart, the Spirit only brings the gospel into the heart, man puts the key in the lock, God only turns it, and opens the heart by it, man brings the word of truth, and God the truth of the word into the soul, man brings the objective word of grace, God alone the attractive grace of the word. If where there is already the new birth, the soul must be fixed on God for further openings, much more where it is not yet wrought. David had an excellent knowledge, yet cries out for the opening of his eyes to see the wonders in God's law. It is God only can knock off the fetters of a spiritual death, and open the iron gates, that the King of glory may enter with spiritual life. If any, therefore, will regard the word more than as an instrument, as a partner with God in his operation, he may justly leave you to the weakness of that, and deny the influx of his own strength.

Therefore let the word be attended with prayer.

(1.) Before you wait upon God in any ordinance, plead with him as Moses did in another case, 'To what purpose should I go, unless thy presence go with me?' What can the letter do without the Spirit, or words without that powerful wind to blow them into my heart? None can have life by the bread of the word, without the blessing of God. As man brings the graft, desire God to insert it. As God has promised gifts to his church, so he promised his own teachings: Heb. viii. 11, 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest.' Urge God

with his own promise, desire him to open his mouth, and to open your hearts; his mouth to breathe, and your hearts to receive. When men overlook God, he makes a separation between the word and his own quickening presence. The end does not necessarily arise from the means; and, therefore, in the use of them, there must be a fiduciary recourse to the grace of God. In the time, too, of waiting upon God, let there be ejaculations; let your hearts be continually lifted up to God; let your expectations be from him. We should be like Jacob's ladder; though the feet stand in Bethel, the house of God, our heads should reach to heaven in all our attendances.

(2.) After you have been at the word. God is the great seer, Christ the great prophet; we should go to him for the repetition of things upon our hearts; we may have that wind afterwards by prayer, which we felt not so stiff at hearing. The operations of truth, as well as the knowledge of it, are best fetched out upon our knees by earnest prayer. How do you know but, while you are praying, the fire may descend from heaven, and transform you into a divine likeness? Thus you will make God the *Alpha* and *Omega* of his own ordinances, in your acknowledgement of him, as well as he is so in himself.

(3.) Rest not in bare hearing. Look for God in the ordinances as he is the living God, who lives in himself and gives life to men and means: Ps. xxxiv. 2, 'My soul longs for the living God,' there is a strength and glory of God to be longed for in the sanctuary; no means are to be rested in or used, but as to lead to such an end for which they are fitted. To rest in the word heard, or read, is to make that our end, which God has appointed only as the means. The word is sweet, but as it is the pipe through which God and his image, God and his grace, which is sweeter and higher than all ordinances, stream to the soul. Rejoice in the word, but only as the wise men did in the star, as it led them to Christ. The word of Christ is precious; but nothing more precious than himself, and his formation in the soul. Rest not in the word, but look through it to Christ.

6. Attend upon the word submissively. It is not the hearer, but the humble hearer, shall find the power of the word working in him; as it is not the speaking a prayer, but the wrestling and struggling of the heart with God in prayer, receives a gracious answer. The humble are the fittest subjects for grace, those that lie upon the

ground with their mouth close to the pipe. 'He gives grace to the humble.' Resign yourselves up to the word, struggle not against the battery it makes, nor the wind that blows; receive every stroke till you see the frame of the new creature. Let a silence be imposed upon the flesh, and self bowed down to the dust, while Christ the great prophet speaks. Be not peevish, not expostulate with God's sovereignty, as they did: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takes no knowledge?' Acknowledge God a free agent, submit to his sovereign pleasure. A truly humble bow to God will prevail more than all the saucy expostulations of proud flesh. In hearing the word, pick not here a part, and there a part, as suits your humour, but consider what really is God's will, and submit to it. Cornelius was of this resigning temper when the Spirit descended upon him: Acts x. 33, 'We are here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' An humble soul, says Kempis, by the grace of God, understands more the reasons of eternal truth in a trice, than a man that has studied many years in the schools, because he has the operations of them in his heart.

7. Receive the word with faith. I mean, not the faith which is a part of the new creature, but an assent. There is a rational belief that it is the word of truth, which is in many men that have no justifying faith. Actuate this. The believing the word to be so, to be the word of God, is the first step to the receiving advantage by it. No man will ever comply with that which he believes not to be true, or believes not himself to be concerned in. It is said by the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, 2, 'The word profited not, because it was not mixed with faith.' There was truth in the word, but no firm assent to it in their hearts. There can never be a full compliance with Christ, in order to a new birth, if there be not first an assent to the word. Where there is a defect in the first concoction, there will also be a defect in the second and third. If you do not believe with Naaman, that the waters of Jordan are appointed by God for this end, and not those of Abana and Pharpar, you will never be rid of the spiritual death, no more than he would have been of his leprosy. You never see God in his sanctuary, nor feel God in his power for want of this. Surely as this made our Saviour suspend the power of his miracles, by the same reason it makes him suspend the power of his word: Mat. xiii. 58, 'He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' If men did

believe there were a place where they might enjoy all earthly delights in a higher measure, at an easier rate, how ambitious would they be of putting themselves into a state to enjoy them? If men did believe the report of the gospel, would they not be full of great undertakings for the enjoyment of the proffers of it? But the gospel, more is the pity, has not naturally that credit with men that a fiction has.

8. Observe much the motions upon your hearts while you are attending upon God. If the sails be not skilfully ordered to catch and hold, and make the best improvement of the wind that blows, much of the wind will pass beside it, and the ship lag many leagues behind, or lie wind-bound a long time before it receive a like gale. God has particular seasons: Heb. iv. 7, 'Today if you will hear his voice.' Sometimes the Spirit is more urging than at another time, and sends his motions thicker upon the heart; let those times be observed, and when there are motions on the Spirit's part, let there be compliance on yours. Catch a promise when the Spirit opens; bind yourselves to an observance of the precept when the Spirit shows it; let God's drawing be answered with the soul's running; observe what precious oil is dropped through the golden pipes upon the heart, and spill it not; take notice of what sparks light upon you, and lose not the warmth they may convey to your hearts; what beam of light breaks in, let it not be puffed out by a temptation or diversion; observe what is afforded to make your hearts burn, and your corruptions and sinful inclinations cool. Regard not so much your affections, as what touches are upon your wills. Affections may arise from a natural constitution of the body, some tempers being more easily excited to exert affections than others, yet they are not always, nor altogether, to be disregarded, nor are they always to be looked upon as ciphers; but, especially, see what influence the word has upon the understanding and will chiefly, as well as upon the affections. Judge of yourselves by the inward power and might, by the breakings in of the light, and the sprightly strain of your wills. The might of the Spirit works in the inner man, Eph. iii. 16; not in a part of the inner man, but in every faculty. See what compunction there is in your souls, what strong desires in the will. Bare affections are but like a sponge, which will by a light compression let out that water which it so easily sucked up. Men may 'receive the word with gladness' without having any root of spiritual grace, Mark iv. 16, 17.

When men regard only particular affections, they usually sit down in those sparks of their own kindling, and look not after a thorough change. Or if you find such affections see whether those affections are raised rather by the truth than the dress; whether they be kindled by the consideration of those attributes of God, his mercy, goodness, wisdom, holiness, which have a great hand in the new birth, whether by the deep consideration of our Saviour's death and resurrection, the great designs of the gospel; whether the motion be orderly, first, understanding, then will, and afterwards affections. This is a genuine flame kindled by a fire which comes down from heaven, working upon all the parts of the soul. A bare work upon the affections is rather a strange and carnal fire. Observe, therefore, what tender blades bud and shoot forth in the higher faculties of your souls.

9. Press the word much upon your hearts after hearing. How great is the neglect of this application of the word of truth! Men will spend hours in hearing, and not one minute in serious reflections, as if the word in their ears, or a receipt in their pockets, could cure the disease in the heart. This is the worm at the root of all our spiritual advantages. What is only dashed upon the fancy, or lightly coloured, may soon be washed off. The soil must be made tenacious of the seed by the harrow of meditation, which hides it in the heart, and covers it with earth; for want of being laid deep, and branded by serious meditation, the seed takes no root, because there is not much earth about it, Mark iv. 5, 6, 16. How can food nourish your body, unless it be concocted by natural heat? or spiritual food enliven you, unless concocted by meditation? The shepherds, after they had heard the news of Christ's incarnation from the mouth of the angel, reflected upon their duty, Luke ii. 14,15. Words must be kept some time upon the mind, and rolled over and over again, before they can work any sensible change, because the heart naturally has an averseness to God and his word; as the strongest physic must be in the body some time, and be wrought upon by the stomach, before it can work upon the humours. How do you know, but while you are musing, a divine fire may sparkle in your souls, and Christ rise in your hearts? Grapes must be pressed to get out the wine that will cheer the heart. Put the question to your soul, in every part you can remember, as our Saviour did to Martha, John xi. 25, 26, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?' There is such a thing

as the new birth: believest thou this? It is necessary to be had: believest thou this? God only can work it: believest thou this? And so for every divine truth. Leave not thy soul to its vagaries, hold it on to the work, press it to give a positive answer whether it believe this or that truth. Put not yourselves off with a slight answer to the question, but examine the reasons of your belief of it. Look upon yourselves as really concerned in the word you hear, otherwise it will no more affect you than if you should tell an ambitious man, gaping after preferment in England, of a wealthy place fallen in Spain, which will not engage his thoughts, as being out of his sphere and at too great a distance. To have a listlessness to such duties, or any spiritual duty, after hearing the word, which is the food of the soul, shows a great corruption within, as the heaviness in the body, and corrupt vapours in the mouth, show the badness of concoction.

10. Labour to have the savour of truth upon your spirits, as well as the notions of it in your heads. The kingdom of God consists not in word, but in power: the new birth consists not in a bare notion but in spiritual savour. The highest notional knowledge comes far short of experimental; the knowledge a blind man has of light and colours, by hearing a lecture upon it, is but mere ignorance to the knowledge he would have if his eyes were opened. Endeavour to have the savour of Christ's ointments, Cant. i. 8, and inward sense exercised, Heb. v. 14. The apostle distinguishes knowledge and judgement, Philip. i. 9. Knowledge is a notion in the head, judgement, or "aisthesis", is the sense or savour of it in the heart. What a miserable thing is it to spend our lives without a taste! Knowledge is but as a cloud that intercepts the beams of the sun and does not advantage the earth, unless melted into drops, and falling down into the bosom of it; let the knowledge of the word of truth drop down in a kindly shower upon your hearts, let it be a knowledge of the word heated with love.

I might have added more; bring plain hearts to the word, put off all disguises. Moses took off his veil when he went into the presence of God. Bring not flesh and blood as your counsellors; these are no friends to a new birth. And come with love; love makes the strongest impressions upon the soul.

It might here be also worth the inquiry, why so few are renewed by the word of truth in this age; why the gospel has no more

powerful effect among us, as in former ages? It is a wonder to see a man begotten by the word, as it was a wonder for the woman to bring forth a man-child, Rev. xii. When our Saviour was brought into the temple, not a man but Simeon knew him; no question but many pharisees, doctors, and gentlemen were walking there, but none but Simeon knew him, to whom he was revealed, Luke ii. 22, 25, the rest looked upon him as an ordinary child. Formerly men flocked to Christ as the doves to the windows. The sword of the Spirit was never unsheathed, but it cut some hearts, the word seems now to have lost its edge and efficacy, which ought to be considered and laid to heart.

Many causes may be rendered; I will only hint a few.

(1.) Taking religion upon trust. Old customs are hardly to be parted with: 'Every man will walk in the name of his God,' Micah iv. 5. To root out false conceptions in religion, which either education, fancy, or humour have rooted, is very difficult.

(2.) A conceit of the meanness of the word, whereby there is a secret contempt of it, and so a formal and customary use of it.

(3.) A conceit of men, that they are new born already. Many think their condition good, because of their civil honesty. Though that be a very comely and commendable thing, yet security in it kills its thousands. Many, because they are free from the common pollutions of the world, and possessed with many amiable virtues, never consider how much their hearts are stored with an enmity against God. Such count their righteousness their gain, and think it a sufficient bribe for God's mercy.

(4.) A conceit that to be new born is but to change an opinion. A change of opinion may look like faith, as presumption does, but it is not faith. The devil holds some men in the chain of sublimated speculations, which hinder the working of the most spiritual and influential truths.

(5.) Pride of reason, frequency of disputes. It is a rational age, an age overgrown with reason, and the Scripture tells us, 'not many wise,' &c. The truths of God are very much turned into scepticism.

(6.) The common atheism that so much prevails among us. How should men regard a discourse of the new birth, a begetting to God,

when they scarce believe there is a God at all, but their own lusts, to be like unto? How should they be wrought upon by the word of God, that scarce believe there is any God to reveal a word, and that there is no word of God?

(7.) Hardness of heart, occasioned (through the just judgment of God) by the frequency and unprofitable hearing of the word. The word is most operative when it comes first into a nation or town. When the heart is not broken by hearing the word of truth, it becomes more hardened and compact in sin. Many other reasons might be rendered, but I have held you too long upon this subject.

*End of A Discourse of the Word, the Instrument of Regeneration.*

## A Discourse of the Nature of Regeneration

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.—2 Cor. v. 17.*

The apostle in those words, ver. 13, 'For whether we be besides ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause,' 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 ecstasy, or 'beside 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 bath an interest in the death of Christ. The love of Christ constrains us actively; the love wherewith Christ has 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 (Vorstius, Calvin, editor) 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 Rom. vi. 2, 'How shall we, being dead to sin,' &c., and called 'a suffering in the flesh, and a ceasing from sin,' 1 Peter iv. 1. If one died for all, then all for whom he died are dead, *jure et 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 should take no care to maintain the life of it. And this seems, by the following verse, to be the true meaning of it: ver 15, '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.' He has 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, do 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 flood 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 independence on God, which was the great sin of Adam, whereby he would malice himself his own chief end, has run 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 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 does 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: Rev. v. 9, 'For thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;' 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,' I Peter ii. 21. 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 pitching 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,' I Peter i. 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 he 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 rise 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 high disesteem 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, Rom. iv. 26, 'He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.' 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: Heb. ix. 24, 'He is entered into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us.' 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, Col. ii. 12.

The apostle proceeds on, 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,—Ps. i. 6. 'The Lord knows the way of the righteous, that is, loves and delights in the way of the righteous,—and on man's part: Hosea iv. 1, 'No knowledge of God in the land,' 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 fleshy 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 has done, those excellent graces which he has communicated, those excellent offices he does exercise, 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. vi. 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 anything 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 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 fleshly 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 exulted 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; such a knowledge the apostle aims at, Philip. iii. 8-10; 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 have 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 passed away,' old affections, old dispositions of Adam; those things, the "archaia", things that are very near of as old a standing us 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. vi. 15, is called 'faith working by love,' Gal. v. 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. lxxv. 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, ver. 18, 'and all things are of God.' 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, 1 Cor. i. 7; and he discourses to them much of the excellence of charity above knowledge, and advises them to 'covet the best gifts,' 2 Cor. xiii. He depresses their confidence in knowledge without grace, which does but puff up, not edify to eternal life. 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.

(1.) Removal of the old form: *old things are passed away*.

(2.) 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 remote 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:

*Doct.* Every man in Christ has a real and mighty change wrought in him, and becomes a new creature.

I pitch 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.

1. Because of the disputes about the nature of 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.

2. It is difficult, because it is visible, not in itself, but in its edicts. We know seed does propagate itself, and produce 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 does lie. We know we have a soul, yet it is hard to tell what the soul is, and in what part it does principally reside. 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: John iii. 8, 'The wind blows where it lists, and thou hears the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' The wind, we feel it, we see the effects of it, yet cannot tell how it arises, where it does repose itself, and how it is allayed; and all the notions of philosophy about it will not satisfy a curious inquirer. 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.

3. 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,' 1 Tim. iii. 16; 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 Peter iii. 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 steams of corruption; as a beautiful picture is not visible in a cloud of smoke. The blindness the god of this world has 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.

4. 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 corruption; but the methods and motions of the Spirit of God in this work are not comprehended, but by those who 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 ripped up and 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. ii. 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 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 has so. In this respect the heavens are said to have ordinances: 'knows thou the ordinances of heaven?' Job xxxviii. 33; and they seem to act in the way of a covenant, Jer. xxxiii. 25, according to such articles as God has pitched 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, "kaine ktisis". 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,

1. How it is differenced from other states of a Christian.
2. What it is not.

B. What it is.

1. First, How it is differenced 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 us 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*.

[1.] 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 into them, is distinguished from their walking in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 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.' 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.

[2.] 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 has life, it is active, and its motions 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: Hosea vi. 2, '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.' 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. viii. 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. viii. 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 cavilling to turn to him, Ps. cx. 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 in 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: Acts xiii. 33, 'God has raised up Jesus again, 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. v. 1, the quickening and raising us together with Christ is by grace, Eph. ii. 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. iii. 14.

But [1.] 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. Regeneration 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, Eph. ii. 1, 'And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' The translators have inserted those words, 'has he quickened,' because those words are put in the 5th verse; but methinks the words refer better to the 23rd 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 freeman there is an alteration of his condition; but neither the one's magistracy nor the other's liberty, 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 filth of sin, and have the purity of God's image in part restored to us.

[2.] They differ in the cause, and other ways. Justification is the immediate fruit of the blood of Christ: 'Being justified by his blood,' Rom. v. 9. Regeneration is by the immediate operation of the Spirit, therefore called 'the sanctification of the Spirit,' 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 aptness. 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 entrances upon us the lineaments of a father. That makes us relatively his sons by conferring a potter, John i. 12. This makes us formally his sons by conveying a principle, I Peter i. 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 way for regeneration, and is the foundation of it: Gal. iv. 5, 6, 'God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has 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 childlike nature. The relation to Christ as brethren is founded upon this new creature: Heb. ii. 11, 'For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified, are all of one.' 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 result also the relation of the sons of God.

(I.) 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, Acts xv. 9, 'purifying their hearts by faith,' 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. i. 5. Regeneration seems to be the life of this gradual sanctification, the health and liveliness of the soul.

2. 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 a 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, Isa. ii. 11, speaking of the times of the gospel. The essential nature of man, his reason and understanding, are not taken away, but rectified. As a carver takes not away the knobs and grain in the wood, but planes and smoothes 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 to 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, Mat. xvii. 2, neither his deity nor humanity were altered, both natures remained the same. But there was a metamorphosis ("metamorfosen"), 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 nor substantial form, as Moses his rod did, when it was turned into a serpent; or the water at Cana 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 principle, 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 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 man, 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 his heat, but turns it into zeal to serve the interest of God. Paul was a man of active disposition; this natural activity of his disposition and temper was not dammed up by grace, but reduced to a right channel, and pitched upon a right object; as he laboured more than any in persecuting, so afterwards he 'laboured more than any' in edifying, 1 Cor. xv. 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 foolish love-songs, and descriptions of new mistresses. 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 does bias 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 lay hid under the chaff, but was corn still. Not a beating up something that lay sculking 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: Rom. vii. 18, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.' 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 does seminally contain in it all grace; it is a putting a new seed into the soil, and exciting it to grow, 'an incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter i. 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. ii. 6; Col. ii. 12; Eph. i. 19, 20. We are just in this work as our Saviour was when the devil came against him: John xiv. 30, 'The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me.' He had 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 non-natural 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 sewed 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, Col. iii. 9, 10, 'putting off the old man, putting on the new man.' 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 paint, nor new plaster laid upon old; 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. xxxvi. 26. The

old nature remains, not in its strength with this addition, but is crucified, and taken away in part with its attendants: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.' 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 carcass, 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 bow. If it were so that all that were baptised were regenerate, then all that were baptised 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 a purge 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.

3. Let us see what it is positively.

(1.) It is a change; and, as to the kind of 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 notional; 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: John v. 25, '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.' If Christ had said only that the hour shall come, it had been meant of the last resurrection, but saying 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, 2 Tim. i. 7, 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, Philip. iv. 13.

[2.] It is a common change 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, Eph. v. 8; instead of a black darkness there is a bright light. As contrary as flesh and spirit, John iii. 6, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 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, bear 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 quite 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: Col. i. 13, a translation 'from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.' "Metestese", 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 inflexibleness to him and his service, and plants a heart of flesh in the room

a pliability to him and his will, Ezek. xxxvi. 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 has 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 graces. 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 there shall come up the fir-tree; instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree,' and God will preserve it from being cut off, Isa. lv. 13, 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 whole soul shall be beautified by grace. The beauty of the church is described in every part, Cant. 1-4, &c.

First, 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 does not do things by halves.

Secondly, 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 did lose its original rectitude. Not a faculty could boast 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 pierces 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. iv. 22. So a regenerate man is not called a new understanding, or a new will, but 'a new man,' ver. 24.

Thirdly, 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 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. The Spirit is said to dwell in a man, Gal. iv. 4, Rom. viii. 9; in the whole man, as the soul does in the body, in forming every part of it, if it dwelt only in one faculty there could be no spiritual motion of the other. The principles in the will would contradict those in the understanding; the will would act blindly if there were 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.

Fourthly, 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 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: Ps. cxix. 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. iv. 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 filth (whereby it is purged from dead works, Heb. ix. 14, settled against the approbation of sin), and a resolution to be void of offence, Acts xxiv. 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: 'Oh 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 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.

Fifthly, 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 putrefied flesh; of a nature different from a pharisaical and hypocritical change, Matt. xxiii. 25-27. It is a clean heart David desires, not only clean hands, Ps. li. 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.

First, It is a change of principle.

Secondly, A change of end.

First, A change of principle. The principle of a natural man in his religious actions is artificial; he is wound up to such a peg, like the spring of an engine, by some outward respects which please him; but as the motion of the engine ceases, 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 serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 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 principles of the new creature are faith and love. What is called the new creature, Gal. vi. 15, is called 'faith working by love,' Gal. v. 6.

Faith. 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, has 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, Heb. xi., acting from faith, 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: ver. 14, 'Those all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,' &c. 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 acceptation 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: Acts ix. 11, 'Behold he prays.' 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 flexibleness to Christ, a faith in him; from a *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

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 whole desire for him: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Then, ver. 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 apostasy; 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. Ps. xxvii. 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 attraction therefore is not the renewed principle, but a choice affection to God. This is a mighty ingredient in this change, and does difference the new creature from all others. One acts out of affection to God, the other out of affection to itself. 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 how 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 to have any steams of self-love rise up to smoke and black a service.

Secondly, 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 does chiefly aim at his own satisfaction in anything, is not a new creature: he has his old deformed end into which he sunk by the fall. But grace carries a man higher, and reduces all to God, and to his well-pleasing. Col. i. 9, 10, 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'. 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: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'They received it as the word of God,' and therefore what he does is for God.

(First.) The principal intent of God in the new creation is for himself: Hosea ii. 23, 'I will sow her to me,' 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 does naturally, the new creature does 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 fit 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 show forth his praise, Isa. xliii. 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 does 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 author?

(Secondly.) 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 ii. 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, Titus ii. 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 does produce 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: John xvi. 14, 'He shall glorify me.' 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 to the brim with zealous desires to have his name exalted upon a high throne among men.

(Thirdly.) 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 does frame the soul; it is 'after God created in righteousness,' &c., Eph. iv. 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 were impossible he should walk with God, or follow him as a dear child. It consists also in likeness to Christ: his resurrection is the pattern and cause of our regeneration: 'Ye are risen with Christ,' Col. iii. 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 anything 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.

(Fourthly.) 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 does elevate or debase a man's spirit, and his actions 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 mud and dirt of lower aims. That grace that is most durable, and does most ennoble the spirit of a man, has this property, that it 'seeks not her own,' nor 'vaunts itself,' 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

(Fifthly.) It is impossible the soul can have this new creation without a change of end. It is not conceivable how anything 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. vi. 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.

(Sixthly.) This change of end does only fit the soul for its proper service. From this end does arise 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 xx. 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 value upon them than he would upon dross and dung, when they were not conducing to his main end, which was the knowledge of Christ, Philip. iii. 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. vi. 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 as 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 has missed of his full aim, and has not had that single respect as he ought, he is unsatisfied and troubled that

God has 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 that act, as it has lived to himself, and brought in something to increase the treasure of his self-ends.

Thirdly, As it is an inward change in respect of principle and end, so, thirdly, it is a change of thoughts. Being new, he is new in the choicest faculty. As when he was after the flesh he minded the things of the flesh, so now being after the spirit he minds the things of the spirit, Rom. viii. 5. As a child has not the thoughts of a man, so neither has a natural man the thoughts of a new creature. A principle is placed in his understanding which does 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 farther, 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', Ps. cxix. 112, 113, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes;' and it follows, 'I hate vain thoughts.' 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 the 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. iv. 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 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, Ps. lxxiii. 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.

Fourthly, 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 has 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 pleases 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 has 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 show it unto the new creature. They are Christ's own words—'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you'—being described before under the title of a Comforter, John xvi. 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: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' 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,' Ps. iv. 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 sucked from the dry breasts of creatures, the comforts of a new creature are derived from the full fountain of life, which makes their very sufferings gloriously comfortable to them, 1 Peter iv. 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, endows 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 edged with comfort in the very acting.

Fifthly, 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.

First, In regard to 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 the enmity to the other. >From multitudes of objects which distracted him, he is come to unity,

which quiets and settles him: Ps. xxvii. 4, '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 inquire in his temple.' It is no lower an object than this, that the soul is conversant about, about God himself, to embrace him; about what has 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 embraces. 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, coarse 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 does 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, Philip. iii. 8.

Secondly, In regard of operations. 'Old things are passed away,' old actions as well as old affections. Operations are never constantly against nature, operari sequitur esse. The heart and the actions do not always contradict one another. 'According to the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks,' Mat. xii. 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: Mat. vii. 20, 'By their fruits you shall know them.' New

apprehensions infer new operations. An alteration of judgment cannot be without an alteration of acting. As he has received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he walks in him,' Col. ii. 6. The very intendment of God in the new creation was this: Eph. ii. 10, 'Created in Christ to good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them.' 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 image 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 fire. A man that has reason superior to sense does use his sense rationally; a renewed man that has grace superior to reason uses 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. v. 18, 25), should do anything 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 ate and drank to the flesh before, now to God, 1 Cor. x. 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 pharisaical pleading of works. In a word, grace instead of nature, spirit instead of flesh. Paul, of a pharisaical 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 has 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,' says the apostle, after an enumeration of several graces, 'has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins;' for indeed he never was.

Thus have I considered this new creation in the nature of a change.

2. Let us consider it in the nature of a vital principle. This new creation is a translation from death to life: 1 John iii. 14, 'We know that we have passed from death to life.' And we have not a spiritual life till we are in Christ. 'He that has not the Son has not life,' 1 John v. 12. When our Saviour called Lazarus out of the grave, he gave him a principle of life and motion. The same he does 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 does animate the faculties in their several motions, as the soul does quicken the members of the body. It is called the hidden man, the inward man, implying that it has 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 does proceed 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 has 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 has 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 has the same soul and body which he had before, but he has 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, Eph. v. 8. This is meant by the seed: 1 John iii. 9, 'His seed remains in him.' 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 iv. 14 ("pege").

(1.) There is such a habit. God does provide 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 has 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 grace has 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, Gal. v. 17, in regard of its term and consequent, life. 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 him to do the work of a mediator, so the soul has a habit prepared 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, Ps. li. 6. As the corrupt nature is a habit of sin, so the new nature is a habit of grace; God does 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 unto 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 xxiv. 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 be 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,' Col. iii. 9, 10. 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 as all sins are parts of that body of death, so all

graces are but strings of this one root. As from that primogeneral 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 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 Peter i. 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, 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9, yet when he would make a new creature, there must be a 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 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.

[2.] From the object it is diversified. As it closes with Christ dying, it is faith; as it rejoices 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's 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, Exod. xxx. 25, 26; as all the 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: 2 Tim. ii. 21, '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.' It is just as it was with Isaiah, chap vi. 6, at the first sight of the vision he complains, 'Woe is me, a man of unclean lips,' 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, ver. 7, 8, 'Whom shall I send? Here am I, send me.' 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, Ps. cxix.

That I may not grate upon any troubled spirit, consider,

(1.) 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 has 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 has 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 has to stand forth and show 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 has 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 had 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 does habitually mind 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.

(2.) 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: Acts xi. 23, '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.' 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 connected 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 does not presently rise to the utmost of its force, till ripened by time and other intervening causes. So though the new creature has 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 predominance 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 reluctance 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. vii. 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 has 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 odd stock and setting up a new, as it relates to the old stock, it does necessarily produce 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 engrafting 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 has 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 crystal, which has 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 venting to endue the principle of his conveyance with a suitable activity. Grace abounds in its vigour, as well as sin has abounded in its kind, Rom. v. 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. xii. 10, 11. First a 'sanctification of the spirit,' then a 'belief of the truth,' to the obtaining of glory, 2 Thes. ii. 13. When anything ceases 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 anything 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. i. 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: Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works.' 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: Rom. vi. 2, 'How can you that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' 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: Ps. cx. 8. The apostle tells us there was a 'necessity laid upon him to preach the gospel,' 1 Cor. ix. 16, 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 kiss each other; a natural, not a coercive 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 does 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 chased to it by the clamours of conscience; but gently moved to it, and upheld by it, by a soft, and dove-like, and 'free spirit,' Ps. li. 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,

'has made us kings and priests unto God,' Rev. i. 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 dullness 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 says, 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' 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 has 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 anything 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 everything 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 man supply a fuel; much more will other creatures act vehemently for that which preserves their being: the toad to its plantain, the swallow to its celandine, 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: Mat. iii. 11, 'I baptise you with water, he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' 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, melts the lumpish leaden 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: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' that is, a spiritual creature. The activity of a spirit does inconceivably surmount 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 vehemence to evil is called a spirit, 'a spirit of whoredom,' Hosea iv. 12; as well as the habit of grace, in respect of its vehemence to good, 'a spirit of love,' 2 Tim. i. 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 almighty bids him let him alone. Where there are rivers of living water in the belly, they will flow, John vii. 38; where there is a divine habit, the soul will have a paroxysm of divine heat for the glory of God, Acts xvii. 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 has a habit, suppose of mathematical knowledge, finds one proposition following upon another, one deduction rising up from another, that he has a largeness, he knows not where to end; so the new creature finds one affection coming upon the neck of another many times in transports and out-goings to God, which knows no limits. It is unfoundedly active;—

[1.] 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 has 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 in earth that I desire besides thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 25. H seems to scorn everything 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 darlings of his soul to the highest heavens. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 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, peers upon it till its eyes be dazzled with its brightness; he is never glutted 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, Ps. cxix. 32; 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 dullness, and his pleasure consists much in a liberty in God's service.

[2.] 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 cheek 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 has 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 be purged out; and to that purpose he daily knocks at heaven 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 skulks, 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. iii. 16; and a 'spirit of power,' 2 Tim. i. 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. iv. 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,' Rom. v. 6, because without life, Eph. ii. 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. iii. 4, is also his strength: Philip. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.' 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, "eis hemas", in them that believe, Eph. i. 19. This power does reside 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 has 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 out of the belly 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*: 1 John ii. 20, 'But you have an unction from the Holy One;' 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,—Acts x. 38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about

doing good,'—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 does with as much ease fly 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. xi. 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 does distinguish between the posture of his will, and the interruptions by that sin which dwelt in him, Rom. vii. 18-20.

(7.) It is pleasantly active. "Hedu men to kata fusin", says 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. xxi. 16. 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 John Baptist did in his mother's womb at the appearance of Christ, as much as his heart sprang up 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, Ps. xix. 5, as the new man does 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 shallowed 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: Ps. xxxvi. 8, 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.' 'In keeping thy commandments there is great reward,' Ps. xix. 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: 2 Cor. xii. 10. says the apostle. 'I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.' The motions of his soul to Christ are his life and joy. He chides his soul that her flights to Christ are not so strong as 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': Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord! my soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord.' And when, by reason of some distemper, he cannot move so readily, some disease fetters him, some corruption has 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: Ps. xlii. 6, 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,' 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 vii. 19. A natural man without an 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 a 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 compliance with it. And the stronger and more vigorous this inward rectitude is in habit, the more pleasure a man has 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 does infinitely delight 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 most perfect 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 does constantly move, because naturally. Whatsoever is natural is constant in its posture; a 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 does obstruct the motions of the soul, and is an unfit instrument for it to act by. This habit is 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, 1 John ii. 27, it is settled by God, given to us in Christ, backed and assured by the earnest of the Spirit in the heart, where this habit is seated. All is expressed, 1 Cor. i. 21, 22, 'Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who has also (that is, beside this) sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in

our hearts.' 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 iv. 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 has 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 harmonical motion, Ezek. xxvi. 27, 'Ye shall keep my judgments and do them;' 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 has 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 iii. 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 has 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: Ps. lxxxiv. 5, 6, 'In whose heart are the ways of them;' some read, 'the high way of God in their hearts,' 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 does the new creature bring forth fruit 'in his season,' Ps. i. 3, in a season proper for that fruit. 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 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, sometimes another.

From all these things put together there follows,

1. A predominance of grace in the new creature. As a state of nature consists in the prevalence of the corrupt habit which leavens the whole man, so the state of grace in a predominance 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: Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead.' 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 has this habit has 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,' Isa. xi. 2. 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts,' Gal. v. 24: *have*, not *shall*. 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 anything more to do with idols, Hosea xiv. 8. He overcomes the world: 1 John v. 4, 'Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world.' He can do all things: enter the lists with the strongest Goliath, repel the sharpest temptations, through Christ which strengthens him, Philip. iv. 13, so that grace is predominant.

2. There follows 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 frenzy has 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 proportionately in every nature that is of nearest approach to it. Righteousness and holiness is the very constitution of the new creature: Eph. iv. 24, 'That new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' 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: Rom. vii. 20 'Sin that dwells in me' still, and acts according to its nature, though much over-powered and weakened by degrees by that habit of grace. Therefore it is a hard thing for him to sin: 1 John iii. 9, 'He cannot sin.' It is as hard for him to contradict the new nature as before to cross the old: 'I cannot do this wickedness,' says Joseph; it is against the frame and disposition of my soul.

(1.) It must be difficult to sin against 'purpose of heart,' which is

the lowest step of the new nature, Acts xi. 23, though it be not hard to sin against a flashy resolve.

(2.) It is hard for a man to sin who has cordially chosen God for his portion, which every new nature does, with a fixed revelation to keep his word: Ps. cxix. 67, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy word.' 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.

(a.) It is difficult for him to contradict the new habit, wherewith he is so highly pleased, and which he is assured has nothing but happiness in the womb of it.

(4.) It must be difficult for him to act that which, by virtue of this habit, he is daily in the mortification of.

(5.) It is difficult for the habit of sin in him to do the same acts after it has received a deadly wound, as for a wounded man to do that which he could when he was sound.

(6.) 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 enmity to the very constitution of it: Gen. iii. 16, 'I will put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.' He can at the best but half sin, and scarce that; he could not commit sin very freely before, because of the reluctance 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 no more be 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 caught at a disadvantage, and be bemired 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, searches 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 has overcome this rebellion of lust, dispossessed it, removed the guilt, and cast out the filth.

4. 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 has the new creature. Man has 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 has a law put into his heart: Jer. xxxi. 23, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,' cited by the apostle, Heb. viii. 10. It is called the 'law of the mind,' Rom. vii. 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: John xvi. 8, 9, 'Of sin, because they believe not in me.' The law of nature is the general work of the mediator in all men, 'who enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John. i. 9. This is the peculiar work of 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 does; 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: Eph. iv. 24, 'That new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' or after God was created "ktisthenta", alluding to that righteousness wherein Adam was created, lost by him, and restored by Christ. This righteousness which Adam had was the righteousness of the law: holiness towards God, which includes the duties of the first 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 engraved in the soul by regeneration. God does not say, I will write another law in their hearts, but 'my law' Jer. xxxi. 33,—that which was my standing law, my law to Adam, and to your fathers. 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, Rom. viii. 7; 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 has 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 'fleshly tables of the heart,' 2 Cor. iii. 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 whole law, something belonging to the essence of a new creature would be wanting. It would not be a new creature, 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 does 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 has any 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, Ps. xix. 7, and so the written law is. It is this law written in the word that we are to take heed to, for the cleansing of our ways: Ps. cxix. 9, '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: Jer. xxxi. 32, 'And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord;' 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 limiting 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 has in his mind of it; but that *idea* or figure of it which he has in his mind, is to be suited to that role which is prescribed to him in the outward pattern; and therefore that

pastern 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.

Quest. Wherein does this writing of the law in the heart consist?

Ans. (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: Isa. li. 5, 'Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law.' 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, does, as every seed, produce a being like itself, and like that plant whose seed it is: from the seed of corn arises a grain of the same nature. This seed being sown first in the understanding, is there cherished, and grows up in principles and thoughts agreeable to itself, whereby the mind becomes the epistle of Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 3, and an ark to preserve the tables of the law; whence David speaks of his soul keeping God's testimonies, Ps. cxix. 167, and not forgetting them, ver. 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 has a likeness to the word and doctrine of the gospel within it; it is delivered into that mould: Rom. vi. 17, 'You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, into which you were delivered.' 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 has made its impression 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 does, 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,' Rom. ii. 14, having it written 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. 'The law,' says the apostle, 'is not made for a righteous man,' 1 Tim. i. 9, 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 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 one judgements and inclination. So that what a new creature does in observance of the law, is from natural freedom, choice, and judgment, and not by the force of any threatenings annexed to it.

(3.) 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, biasing 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,' Rom. vii. 25, 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 did embrace 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,' Rom. viii. 2; 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 hindrance to it. As the devil does act in men's hearts, Eph. ii. 2, not personally, but by a principle in the heart, the law of sin, so does the Spirit of life by the law of grace; for being written by a living Spirit, it is a living law. This is the chief intent or the whole new creation, to cause us to walk in God's statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Ps. xxxvii. 31, 'The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide.' The soul being thus evangelised and spiritualised, 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. ii. 14, because there was a law of nature engraved 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. v. 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 does 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: Ps. cxix. 47, 48, 'I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved: my hands will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved;' and often in

that psalm 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 has recovered breath, and stands upon its feet! If he finds not his heart answering the law, he longs after the precepts, as the prophet says: Ps. cxix. 40, 'I have longed after thy precepts, quicken me in thy righteousness.' 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 has 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 does 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'? Rom. vii. 23, 21. The law in his members 'brought him into captivity to the law of sin.' Then, 'Oh wretched man that I am! 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 says the effect of his 'delight in the law of God after the inward man,' ver. 22. And that this writing the law does 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, Ps. xl. 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,' 2 Cor. iii. 6, 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 wrote 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. iii. 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 rape 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.

5. The fifth thing. As there is 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 does consist. The new creature is begotten; begotten, then, in the likeness of the begetter, which is 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: Col. ii. 10, 'renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.' His misery consisted in losing it; our felicity, therefore, does consist in recovering it. Hence it is called a 'divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. Every thing receives its denomination from the better part. A man is denominated rational, though he has 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. Where can that be but in God? His womb and power is the womb that bare it, and the breasts which gave it suck. 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 iii. 9. Now to be born of any thing is to receive a form like that, which the generating person has. 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. i. 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. iv. 24. The likeness in a state of glory is founded upon a sight of God as he is, 1 John iii. 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, ver. 5, when he says, that 'he was manifested to take away our sins.' 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 bowels, 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, and the chiefest of his name, Jehovah, "he", which is twice repeated in it, into the names of Abraham and Sarai, reckoned Nehem. ix. 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 "el", 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. 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. viii. 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 adoption. So that grace, which does 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. i. 15, 1 John iii. 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 has no communion with its nature; but as wax receives the image of the seal, which though it receives nothing of the substance, yet receives exactly the stamp, and answers it in every

part. So the Scriptures represents it: Eph. i. 13, 'You were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.' 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. iii. 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 has not only the face, or eyes, but the other members. Though a Christian may have one or too parts of this image more beautiful than the rest, as a man may have a sparkling eye that has not a proportionable lip, yet he has 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. v. 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 written 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 does righteousness is righteous, as Christ is righteous,' 1 John iii. 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 it were) 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. iv. 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,' Philip. ii. 5, and to 'arm ourselves with the same mind,' 1 Peter iv. 1, which supposes 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, Philip. iii. 10. And God did 'predestinate' all his own 'to be conformed to the image of his Son,' Rom. viii. 29, "summorfous", of the same form and shape. 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. liii. 10; not a carnal 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. i. 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, *metonymia causae pro effectu*. 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 earthly,' by the other the new creature has the 'image of the heavenly,' 1 Cor. xv. 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 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: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 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 has. 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.

Quest. Wherein does this likeness to God chiefly consist?

Ans. 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 loses not that image of God which is visible, cannot love the invisible original, 1 John iv. 12, 20, and so, having no likeness to God in his affection, can have no likeness to God in his nature. And the apostle positively affirms, that 'he that loves, is born of God,' 1 John iv. 7. The new creature extends its arms to every thing which has 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: 'Oh 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, and God does trust 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 does reach out herself to all that is good, and has 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,' Eph. ii. 17, 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 anything 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. iv. 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 their own and others' iniquities, John viii. 44; so renewed men are God's children, because they live the life of God, and abound in the works of God, 1 Cor. xv. 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 has 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 does righteousness is born of him:' 1 John ii. 29, 'If you know that he is righteous, you know that every one that does righteousness is born of him'. It is by this the children of God are manifest from the children of the devil, 1 John iii. 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 Peter i. 4. If by afflictions good men are partakers of God's holiness, much more by regeneration: Heb. xii. 10, 'He chastened us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' 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 near 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', Rom. iii. 23; 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.

Use 1. It serves for information. 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,

1. 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 written in text letters, and with many flourishes, when the law of God is written 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.

(1.) Profane men are numerous. None will offer to rank these in the number of new creatures. Such nasty 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 God-like natures. A devotedness to the sins of the flesh is inconsistent with the circumcision made by Christ: Col. ii. 11, 'Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ;' 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 contemn 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 a hugging base lusts against the light of nature, a contempt of God's 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?

(2.) 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, Deut. v. 24, 'Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments!' 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 lie 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 of God by profession, when there is no right to it for want of regeneration. Instead of humility, according to our Saviour's pattern, does not 'pride compass men as a chain,' Ps. lxxiii. 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 Gentilism 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, Titus i. 1b. 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. vi. 8, 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 issue of all such doctrines are that refer not to this, 'pride, doting about questions, envy, strife, railings, and evil surmisings,' verse 4. A heap of motions may consist with a body of death in its full strength, but a spirit of grace cannot; a nationalist 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, showing 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 written in their hearts! Nay, the image of the devil may be more deeply engraved 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 spiritualised wickedness.

(1.) 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 x. 21, but scarce upon the Pharisees without anger and disdain.

(2.) Yet 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 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. iii. 5; a form of godliness; as a change that is made upon does in the draught of a picture, but no change in it by the conveyance of life. For,

[1.] It removes not the body of death. It is a cutting away the outward luxuriances, not the inward root. It removes the stench and putrefaction, not the death, an embalmed carcass is as much dead as a putrefied one, though not so loathsome. It removes not that wherein the strength of sin lies, though it does 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 vainglorious and envious spirit: Eph. iv. 17, 18, 'Henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God.' By the Gentiles, from whom the apostle would have the Ephesians differences, 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. i. 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 phrases it, a walking in the vanity of their mind, in the darkness of their understandings, though not in a 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.

[2.] 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 an higher form. A profane man reduced to a philosophical morality is putrefied 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,' Mat. xvii. 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 iii. 6. Let it be what it will, a Nicodemus as well as Judas, it is flesh, a more refined sensuality, an animal life.

[3.] 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 is 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 a rising from sleep by the jog of conscience, this a rising from death by the breath of the Spirit, working a deep contrition, and making all new.

[4.] It 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. vii. 1; that binds the hands, this clears the heart; that purges 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 anything 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: Ezek. xviii. 31, 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit.' That is a casting away the loathsome works of the flesh, this a new root to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

[5.] It 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 xii. 2). This is a 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Cor. vii. 1. That is an outward reformation from the hearing of the word, some acts materially performed from the newness of the thing, John v. 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 profaneness, 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: Gen. xx. 6, 'I withheld thee from sinning against me;' 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 did 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 nips 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: Isa. i. 5, 'Why should you be stricken any more? you will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.' 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 heavenward, 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 extrinsic 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. vi. 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 expressed, 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-humoured 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. viii. 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 in Mat. xiii. 20, 21, 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.' The word translated *anon*, and *by and by*, euthus", 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 excellency above that of the greatest moralist under heaven. The apostle calls it a change from 'glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 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 has 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 does exceed 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 "psuchikos", the rational and the spiritual man, 1 Cor. ii. 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 mankind, the end of his patience in forbearing his punishment upon contempt 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 Thess. i. 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 anything, next to God, more worthy our esteem than that which bears his image? Is anything, 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 x. 16: 1 Thess. iv. 8, 'He therefore that despises you, despises not man but God, who has also given us his Holy Spirit.' 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 xv. 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 has 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 does 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. vii. 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 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.

Use 2. Is of comfort. 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 womb that bare 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 does 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 connection is there between you and the three persons! God in Christ, and Christ in you, that you may be 'made perfect in one,' John xvii. 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. viii. 8-10. 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 corruption of the world; by the new birth you are descended from the Son of God, and 'counted to the Lord for a generation,' Ps. radii. 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 has 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 relation, 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 most tender respect to his own likeness; he must needs take a pleasure in a resemblance to his own nature, in a habit of his Spirit's infusing. Can God despise the work of his own hand? 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,' Ps. cxlvii. 10, 11. You are the first fruits of his creatures, peculiarly dedicated to him as his portion by the new birth: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begot he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures,' 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 approaches 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 his 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. viii. 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 has no pleasure in anything 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 regeneration by his Spirit, that the joy in his works is restored to him; if he should not delight in you, what has 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. xii. 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 shall fill hell with their souls.

3. How great a foundation then is laid in this for your happiness! New creatures, 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 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 non-natural 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 a 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 iii. 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, verse 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 has the image of the devil, has a model of hell; the new creature having the image of God, has 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 Peter i. 8, 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 estate, 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 does resemble 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 always, and shouting for joy, since mercy does so compass you about, Ps. xxxii. 11, Philip. iv. 4. As upon the awakenings of conscience, and the exercise of its reflective 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 has 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 does shine upon this image, and both illustrate and discover 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 it is 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 filth of 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; he sits upon his throne and says it: Rev. xxi. 5, 'Behold, I make

all things new.' 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 iii. 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. iii. 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 has 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. hi. 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 the spirit till there be not a grain of the soul free from this new enlivening. As he began, 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 soul 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 the perfecting the Israelites' deliverance in bringing them into Canaan, that the nations might not say, God was not able to deliver them, Num. xiv. 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 has 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: Rom. viii. 28, they 'all work together for good, to them who are called according to his purpose.' As regenerating grace gives us a relation to God, so it should expel fear: Isa. lviii. 1, 'Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art mine.' What reason is there to fear when he has 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 has new created thee? The grace wherein you stand, or the state of grace, should make you not only to 'rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,' but to 'glory in tribulations also,' as well as the apostle, Rom. v. 2, 3, because it 'works patience,' &c. 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 everything 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 four 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 has 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 begot it broods upon its own birth, and watches for the defence of it against its mighty adversaries. Satan watches to cast dirt 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 everything that opposes him, hates everything 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 has 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: Ps. ii. 2 and 7 compared, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' 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, Esther vi. 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 anything 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, Philip. i. 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: Hosea xiv. 5, 'I will be as the dew to Israel: he shall grow up as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.' 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, has no mind to be a loser of it. He that has 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 rags which he has dung upon the dunghill. The new creation is a 'fellowship with Christ in his resurrection,' Philip. iii. 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 humiliations; 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 has 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 overpowered 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.

[1.] If your complaints of the 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 the stony ground 'presently sprung up,' Mat. xiii. 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.

[2.] 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 does 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 does something, "aproaireton", is both a god and a demon. 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 i. 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. v. 26.

[3.] All God's communications of grace are gradual. Doth the mustard seed spring up in an 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 be upon his legs. 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: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.' 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 has 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.

[4.] Consider well how it is with thy will. It is not the having of lusts, but the fulfilling of them, wherein our danger lies: Rom. xiii. 14, 'We have then put on the Lord Jesus Christ, when we make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof,' but endeavour to walk holily. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews could pretend to little more than will: chap. xiii. 18, 'willing to live honestly,' "kalos", comely, beautifully. And herein Paul 'exercised' himself, Acts xxiv. 16. He manifested this will by compliance with all seasonable occasions to that purpose. Is there grace in thy 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 has wrought in Christ in order to your full deliverance. They did not so in Paul, Rom. vii. 24, 25; let them not do so in you. Take comfort in what God has wrought, bless him for it, and solicit him to confirm that which he has wrought in you, Ps. lxxviii. 24. He that provides food for the ravens that cry, will not stop his ears at the voice of his own image.

(6.) 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 son, the first fountain of light. How joyfully will the original and copy meet: Philip. i. 23, 'to depart from hence,' is 'to be with Christ.' 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?

Use 3. Is for examination. Of all things, this deserves the strictest inquiry, 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: John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knows that I love thee.' It is in this reflexive power that a man excels a brute.

2. You must inquire 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 inquire, 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 does consist. 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 to 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 wolfish nature is gone, and a lamb-like nature in the place of it; he has 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,

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, Ps. xiii. 2; Ps. lxxxiv. 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 fullness, Mat. v. 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,' Philip. iii. 11-13, &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 a 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, says he, our endeavours should be for a likeness to God, not to good men. To endeavour to be like to man, is to make 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 has 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. vi. 4. Sin does 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? Ps. cxix. 128, 'I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.' Ver. 133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' 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 viii. 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. v. 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 pitched 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 everything that he hates? Or is there any one lust thou should 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? Mat. x. 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 has not a disposition to lay down his life for the honour of God. And that apostle who has spoken so much of the new creature had such a raised affection, Acts xx. 24, 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.' 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 anything, 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 fort 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: there 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:' Zech. xii. 10, 'the spirit of grace and of supplication.' The Spirit is not a dumb spirit in the new creature. The first work in the heart is to cry, 'Abba, Father': Gal. iv. 6, 'God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' 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: Acts ix. 11, 'Behold, he prays.' 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: 2 Tim. ii. 22, 'Peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart,' and the characteristic note of a saint: 1 Cor. i. 2, 'Saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.'

5. What valuations 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 has a new taste, his palate is embittered to his former pleasure, and refined and prepared for his new delight: he relishes what before he loathed, esteems that sweetest that before was most unpleasant. 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: Eph. v. 26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' 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. xii. 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: 1 Cor. ii. 6, 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.' 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? 1 Pet. ii. 2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.' 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,' Ps. xix. 10, 'and sweeter than honey?' Ps. cxix. 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 cut the throat of 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 does 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. i. 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 an irregularity upon him, and makes him a monstrous begetter. 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 i. 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 arises from the 'fear of God in the heart,' Jer. xxxii. 40, and a care to please God in his walk: 2 Cor. vii. 11, 'Yea, what care!' 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. xxxvi. 26, 27. To what purpose does 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 turns, but 'to walk in them,' Eph. ii. 10; and he is described by the apostle to be one that 'walks after the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 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, Titus ii. 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 anything of a new creature in you? Judge for 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 has the black mark of the devil in his life has no reason to think he has the spiritual badge of Christ in his heart; and if he do, he does deceive himself.

7. How is your disposition against those things which are contrary to a divine nature? No creature has a greater antipathy to that which is contrary to its nature, than a regenerate man has 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. v. 16.

(1.) 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. v. 17. The contest is in the whole man; grace being seated in the heart, sends out its commands, and despatches forces to every part to meet with its enemy, as motion beginning at the centre diffuses itself through the whole sphere, shaking every part to the circumference. Light will oppose darkness in every part of the air; they cannot shake hands together; the increase of one is the decrease of the other. Sensibility is a sign of life; a dead man complains not of wounds and cutting; you may take out his bowels, cut limb from limb, but a living man will complain of the least prick of a pin or a pinch. Natural men cannot complain of that which they do not feel. There is a mighty friendship between a dead carcass 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. vii. 5. But the new creature counts the least sin that has 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,' Ps. cxix. 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?

(2.) 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 more fleshly and sensual iniquities are excluded. There is a war in the heart of the new creature against spiritual wickedness: Eph. vi. 12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;' or wickedness spiritualised in the high places, "*Pros ta pneumatika tes ponerias en tois epouraniois*", 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.

(3.) Are you in the like 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 more civil 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, Prov. iv. 14, 15, he will 'avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' His spirit will rise against anything 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 satanic 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 cannot be in any man's heart, unless he delight to do the will of God: Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is within my heart, I delight to do thy will, O my God.' 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. lviii. 14, and count him his 'exceeding joy,' Ps. xliii. 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. ix. 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; without 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. vii. 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, Ps. cxix. 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 anything, 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 choice embraces of your souls you clasp about God himself? O happy man! None but a divine nature could fill thee with such pleasing transports.

Use 4. Is of exhortation.

1. To 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.

[1.] 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. vi. 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, has 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 has made you differ so vastly in your state and condition?

[2.] Has 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 has 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.

[3.] And this God has done for you, when you were in the common lump, 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 a contempt of you, and a loathing you forever. 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 dared not ask, above a rational creature, even to a divine, when he had no motive to anything, 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.

[4.] It is therefore a wonderful and miraculous change. If the

framing the body of man be so 'wonderful' a work, Ps. cxxxix. 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 has rolled away the reproach of your corruption and death, as he said of the Israelites when they were circumcised in Canaan, Joshua v. 9.

To quicken you to praise,

First, 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? A 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!

Secondly, 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, in me; to clear such a nasty soul, imprint such a 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. ii. 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, Eph. iii. 16, 'that he would grant you to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,' 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 (ver. 17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith'), that he does 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 has 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 xxii. 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 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 concourse of God to his gracious creature, as well as his common concourse 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 pleasures 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 has 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 sun above a dunghill. Blow it up every day, dress the lamps as the priests 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. iv. 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. iv. 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 fullness 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 earthy 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: Job xvii. 9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' The new nature can no more stand at a stay, 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 has 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 band, but some extrinsic ligaments; not fed with the increases of God, because he does 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.

[2.] It 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 shows itself in an equal increase of all the members in the new creature. And it is best discerned 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 natures, as humility has a mild disposition, which by the addition of grace, advances 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 defaces 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, Hosea xiv. 7.

[3.] By this 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 right to heaven will appear to yourselves.

(4.) A fourth exhortation. 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. v. 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. vi. 7.

[1.] 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. iii. 9, 10. The gospel adorns the soul by its impression; the soul should adorn the gospel by its conversation: Titus ii. 10, 'Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' 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 lantern, that God may be glorified, Mat. v. 16. Let not lust and sin, extraneous to the new creature, 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. iii. 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, Philip. ii. 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: Job i. 1, That man was perfect, and feared God.'

[2.] Live 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 anything 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. 1 John v. 4, 'Whatsoever is born of God, overcomes the world;' there is a mighty antipathy between the world, and anything 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 peep its head above water, towards heaven.

[3.] 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 a glory, 2 Cor. iii. 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 toward the state of bliss.

[4.] 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 did rise up in you, when the irresistible charms of divine love did first allure 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.'

[5.] Let your affection be carried to everything 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 does 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 iv. 16. Love is, therefore, the nature of the new creature, and love to the same objects whereon God's love is pitched, 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.

[6.] Endeavour to propagate your new nature to others. 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 a 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 everything into its own flames. This is a peculiar mark set upon the evangelical times, and the special fruit of a gospel impression: Isa. ii. 3, 'Many people shall say, Come se, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.' 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 implanted 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,

First, 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? Neh. vi. 11. Or as Joseph to his mistress, 'Behold, my master has committed all that he has 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.

Secondly, It was the intendment 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 does the apostle chide the Christians because they did not advance above the life of mere man; and therefore gives them a title chiefly belonging to the unregenerate world: 1 Cor. iii. 3, 'Are you not carnal. and walk as men?' 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, Mat. v. 44-47,

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,' I Peter ii. 9; they are a 'chosen generation,' therefore should have choice conversations; a 'royal priesthood,' therefore princes' deportments; a 'holy nation and peculiar people,' therefore should have holy and peculiar behaviours. They should thus be public evangelists, to set forth "edzangeilete", the graciousness and righteousness of God. There is also the highest obligation, because he has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. God intended that their conversations 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.

Thirdly, 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 disparage his nature,

and rather degrade God to a likeness to the flesh than to mount up to a true resemblance of him: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thought I was altogether such a one as thyself' 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 does behold the upright,' Ps. xi. 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. v. 22, 24, to witness his pleasure in it?

Fourthly, 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 alloy. 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 torches and feelings of him? How hastily will he run to meet you half way, and kiss you with the kisses of his mouth? 'Thou meets him that rejoices and works righteousness,' Isa. lxiv 5. How intimately will he wind himself into the secret corners of your hearts, as John xiv. 23, 'and make his abode with you;' and like fire in every part of iron, fill every part of the new man with a glowing and divine heat?

Fifthly, 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. lxii. 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!

Exhortation 2. 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 stupefied 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? Oh what a happy thing were it, if this day Christ were formed in all our hearts; that though we are nasty dunghills, worse than the stable wherein our Saviour was born in the flesh, we might become the sanctuary of our 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.

(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. ii. 3. Were your old natures acceptable to God, what need any change? But the requiring this change demonstrates the old nature to be abhorred by God. This nature is the devil's filth, 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? If you not think worse of yourselves for it? And are you not pleased when you can 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, ravishing away your pleasures, subjected you to vanity, the wrath of God, the hatred of angels, and tyranny of devils; it is this that has deformed your souls. Despoil yourselves of this cursed old man, 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 nearest its original; that star is most glorious that does 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 anything 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 filthiness, 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. The sons of men have but a little particle of the vile matter and flesh of their fathers, but a renewed man has 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 in her womb, Luke xi. 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 ways of pleasantness,' Prov. iii. 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 has 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 has 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 completing of it 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: I John v. 19, 'The whole world lies in wickedness, or 'in the wicked one,' "En toi poneroi"; more consonant to the former verses. Satan and natural men lie nugging 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 man to be as God? Adam desired it unlawfully; the same spirit runs through the veins of his posterity. God has 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 formation 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, Col. iii. 11. In the new creation 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all;' 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, does 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 hindrance 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.

Quest. But what means must be used to obtain this excellent privilege?

Aim. 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 but by God, who is more able to create new hearts in us than the unregenerate man is to work a moral reformation.

For means:

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. iii. 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,' Psalm xxxiv. 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 has chilled those purposes; weaver 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 does 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,' Psalm cxlv. 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, Psalm cxix. 106.

5. Pray. 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 fullness 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 an old devil, 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 his 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 has appointed as an instrument to effect it, is to dishonour God; for while you pray to him to be a father to beget you, 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, 1 Cor. iv. 15, 'for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.' 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, Eph. iv. 18, 'alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.' Study the promises, and plead them before the Lord, for 'by these you are made partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 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. iv. 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 Chief of Sinners Saved

*“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”—1 Tim. 1:15*

*Observation.* I. The salvation of sinners was the main design of Christ’s coming into the world. II. God often makes the chiefest sinners objects of his choicest mercy.

To show that God does so, observe,

**1** God has formally made *invitations* to such. See what a black generation they were, Isa. 1, by the record of their sins. They were rebels, and rebels against him that had nursed them. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me,” ver. 2. And in this respect worse than the beasts they were masters of; the stupid ox and the dull ass outstripped them in intelligence. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,” ver. 3. He calls upon heaven and earth to judge between them, ver. 2. He appeals to men and angels, as a jury, to give their verdict, whether these people had not been the most disingenuous and ungrateful people in the world. Or if by heavens and earth be meant magistrates and people, as in the prophetic style they are usually taken, God then appeals to themselves, to let their own natural consciences and the common intelligence their sins had left them, to judge between them. He comes to charge them, “laden with iniquity,” ver. 4. They had such great weights lying upon them, that they were not able to stir; or laden with it, as some crabtree is with sour fruit. They had sprouted from a wicked stock; they had corrupted one another by their society and example, as rotten apples putrefy the sound ones that be near them.

They had been incorrigible under judgments; God had used the rod again and again; but seeing there was no reformation, he was even weary of whipping them any longer; “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more,” ver. 5. They were also so universally infected, that there was no sound part about them, but running sores all over; both head and heart were infected; corrupt notions in the one, and corrupt affections in the other. Or if you take it prophetically, head signifies the chief magistrate; heart, the judges; feet, the common people. The fire which had burnt their cities had not consumed their lusts, and dried up their sins; “Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire, your land strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers,” ver. 7. And had it not been for a small remnant, they had been as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 9. Their services were polluted, vain, and an abomination to him, ver. 13. They were a trouble to him, his soul hated them, he was tired with them, ver. 14, for they came with their bloody murderous hands into God’s presence.

Yet though he justly charged them with these horrid crimes, he gives them assurance of being received if they would return to him; “Come now, and let us reason together,” ver. 18. He would condescend to debate the case with them, when one would have thought he should have said, I’ll have nothing to do with such a crew as they; God loves to discourse with men about this argument of pardon; and he loves that men should hear him speak concerning it. He would dispute them out of their sins, into good and right apprehensions of his mercy. So, “Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted,” Isa. 31:6. Revolted, there is their sin; deeply, there is the aggravation of it; and being also children of Israel, a people of much mercy and miracles, there is another aggravation; yet turn unto him against whom you have thus sinned. The great objection of a penitent is, I have sinned, and I know not whether God will receive me: consider, God knows your sin better than you do, yet he kindly calls to you, and promises you as good a reception as if you had never sinned.

So, “They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with

many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord,” Jer. 3:1. Though you have been a common adulteress, and made all comers, every idol welcome, and been in league with many sins, yet upon your return I’ll claim you as my own; and these are God’s warrants for encouragement.

2. God has given examples of it in scripture. Adam the ringleader of all rebellions of mankind in the world, had the promise of the seed of the woman to break the serpent’s head made to him; and in the genealogy of Christ, is called the Son of God, Luke 3:38; not only in respect of creation, for so the devil is the son of God, but in a nearer relation. Yet all that deluge of wickedness which has overflowed the world since the fall, sprung out of his loins. Nay, Abraham, the father of the faithful, was probably an idolater in Ur of the Chaldees, and a worshipper of the sun and fire, as his fathers were, Jos. 24:2; yet God makes a particular covenant with this man, presents him with a richer act of grace than any in the world besides him had, namely that the Messiah, the great Redeemer of the world, should come from his seed; this man is set up as the pattern of faith to others, and his bosom seems to be a great receptacle of saints in glory, Luke 16:22, 23. Israel’s sins were as a thick cloud, yet this powerful sun did melt them; “I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins,” Isa. 44:22. A sullen gloomy morning often ends in a well complexioned noon. Manasseh is an eminent example of this doctrine. His story, 2 Chron. 33, represents him as a black devil, if all the aggravations of his sin be considered.

1. It was against *knowledge*. He had a pious education under a religious father; an education usually leaves some tinctures and impressions of religion. No doubt but the instructions his father Hezekiah had taught him, and the exemplary holiness he had seen in him, were sometimes awakened in his memory, and recoiled upon his conscience.

2. His *place and station*, as a king; sins of kings are like their robes, more scarlet and crimson than the sins of a peasant. Their example usually infects their subjects. As they are not without their attendance in their progresses and recreations, so neither in their vices and virtues.

3. Restoration of *idolatry*. Had he found the worship of the host of heaven derived to him by succession from his father, and the idols set up to his hand, the continuance of them had less of sin, because more of temptation; but he built again those high places and altars to idols after they had been broken down, ver. 3, and dashed in pieces that reformation his father had completed.

4. Affronting God to *his very face*, He sets up his idols, as it were to insult God, and built altars in the house of the Lord, and in the two courts of his temple, whereof God had said he would have his name there for ever, ver. 4, 5. He brought in all the stars of heaven to be sharers in that worship which was only due to the God of heaven. What, could he find no other place for his idols, but in the very temple of God? Must God be cast out of his house, to make room for Baal?

6. *Murder*. Perhaps of his children, which he caused to pass through the fire, as an offering to his idol, ver. 6. It may be it was only for purification. But he had the guilt of much innocent blood upon him, the streams whereof ran down in every part of the city. “Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem with blood from one end to the other,” 2 Kings 21:16.

6. Covenant with the *devil*. He used enchantments, and witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, ver. 6; yea, he had acquaintance with more devils than one, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, in the plural number.

7. His *other men’s sins*. He did not only lead the people by his example, but compelled them by his commands. “So I made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen God had rooted out,” 2 Chron. 33:9, to make room for them. Hereby he contracted the guilt of the whole nation upon himself.

8. *Obstinacy* against admonitions,. God spoke to him and his people, but they would not hearken, or alter their course, 2 Kings 21:10.

9. *Continuance* in it. He ascended the throne young, at twelve years old, ver. 1. It is uncertain how long he continued in this sin. Torniellus thinks fifteen years. Bellarmine twenty-seven. Kimchi fifty years, reckoning but five years of his life after his restoration.

What a world of sin, and aggravations of it, were there in this man! And yet God was intreated, ver. 19.

3. The *ancestry whereof Christ* came, seems to imply this; God might have kept the stock, whence Christ descended according to the flesh, pure and free from being tainted with any notorious crimes; but we find sins of a crimson dye even among them. There are no women reckoned up in Christ's geneology, but such as in scripture are noted for looseness, Mat. 1:3. Tamar who played the harlot with Judah her father-in-law, Gen. 28. Rahab, Mat. 1:5, the harlot Or Jericho. Ruth, ver. 5, a Gentile and Moabitess the root of whose generation was Lot's son, by incest with his own daughter. Bathsheba, ver. 6, David's adulteress. He chose these repenting sinners, out of whose loins Christ was to come, that the greatest sinners might not be afraid to come to him.

Was David, whose son our Saviour is called, much better? It is true he was a man after God's own heart, but yet very notorious for that act of murder and adultery, and with more aggravating circumstances than usually are met with in acts of the like nature, 2 Sam. 11. Uriah was a godly man, and had a sense of the condition of the church and nation whereof he was a member, ver. 11, and such a man's bed David is not only content to defile, but he pollutes his soul with drunkenness, ver. 13, lays snares for his life, not in a manly, but sly and treacherous manner; for while he does caress him, and show him a fair countenance in his palace, he draws up secret instructions to Joab so to order the business, that Uriah might be thrust into his grave, and makes him the courier to carry the commission for his own death, ver. 15, 16. After all this he has no remorse when he hears of the loss of so godly and valiant a man, but wipes his mouth, and sweeps all the dirt to the door of Providence, ver. 25. Now Christ's stock being thus tainted, was methinks an evidence that penitents, though before of the greatest pollutions, might be welcome to him. And that as he picked out such out of whose loins to proceed, so he would pick out such also in whose hearts to reside.

4. It was Christ's employment in the world to court and gain such kind of creatures. The first thing he did, while in the manger, was to snatch some of the devil's prophets out of his service, and take them into his own, Mat. 2:1, some of the Magi, who were

astrologers and idolaters. When he fled from Herod's cruelty, he chose Egypt, the most idolatrous country in the world, for his sanctuary; a place where the people worshipped oxen, crocodiles, cats, garlic, *putida numina* [unclean spirits], all kind of riff-raff; to show that he often comes to sojourn in the blackest souls. The first people he took care to preach to were the seamen, who us usually are the rudest and most debauched sort of men, as gaining the vices as well as the commodities of those nations they traffic with, Mat. 4:13. The inhabitants of those sea coasts are said to sit in darkness, ver. 16; in darkness both of sin and ignorance, just as the Egyptians were not able to stir in that thick darkness which was sent as a plague upon them. And the country, by reason of the vices of the inhabitants, is called the region and shadow of death; a title properly belonging to hell itself. To call sinners to repentance was the errand of his coming. And he usually delighted to choose such that had not the least pretense to merit, Mark 2:17. Matthew, a publican, Zaccheus, an extortioner, examples of the majority of that generation of men and harlots, and very little company besides.

He chose his attendants out of the devil's rabble; and he was more Jesus, more a Saviour, among this sort of trash, than among all other sorts of people, for all his design was to get his people out of hell itself. What was that woman that he must needs go out of his way to convert? A harlot, John 4:18, an idolater, for the Samaritans had a mixed worship, a linsey-woolsey religion, and upon that account were hateful to the Jews. She continued in her adultery up to the very time Christ spoke to her, yet he makes her a monument of his grace; and not only so, but the first preacher of the gospel to her neighbours. "Is not this the Christ?" ver. 29, and an instrument to conduct them to him; "Come, see a man which told me all things," &c. Was any more defiled than Mary Magdalene? Seven devils would make her sooty to purpose, and so many did Christ cast out of her. "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene," Mark 16:9, out of whom he cast seven devils. This lustful devil he turns into a weeping saint.

What was that Canaanitish woman who had so powerful a faith infused? One sprung of a cursed stock, hateful to God, rooted out of the pleasant land, a dog, not a child: she comes a dog, but returns a child; Christ made this crab-apple in a wilderness to bring forth

fruit, even the best that heaven could afford, viz. the fruit of faith; and larger and better bunches of it than that time sprouted out of any branches of the Jewish vine, so well planted, and so often watered by Christ himself. When he comes to act his last part in the world, he saves a thief who was next to the hell-gates, ready to be pushed in by the devil. Do you find examples among the Pharisees? No. Dunghill-sinners take heaven by violence, while the proud Pharisees lose it by their own righteousness. Scribes and theologians continue devils in the chair, while harlots come out saints from the brothels, and the thief goes onward a convert from the cross.

Since there was but one that in his own person he converted after he went to heaven, what was he? One that had “breathed out threatenings and slaughters against the church,” Acts 9:1. To do so was as common with him, and natural to him, as to inhale air, and breathe it out again: this man, galloping to hell as fast as his mad rage and passion could carry him, Jesus stops in his charge, ordains a preacher of a persecutor; gives him as large a commission as he had given any of his favourites; for he makes him the chiefest apostle of the Gentiles. What bogs and miry places did Christ drain and make fruitful gardens? What barren and thorny wildernesses did he change into pleasant paradises? He made subjects of vengeance objects of mercy: he told the woman of Samaria who lived in fornication, that he was the Messiah; “The woman saith to him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ.” “Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he,” John 4:25, 26; which he never disclosed to the self-righteous Pharisees, nor, indeed, in so many words to his disciples, till Peter’s confession of him.

5. The commission Christ gave to his apostles was to this purpose. He bids them proclaim the promise free to all; “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” Mark 16:15. All the world, every creature. He put no difference between men in this respect, though you meet with them in the likeness of beasts, and devils never so wicked, never so abominable; as long as they are creatures, reach out the cup of salvation to them, if they will drink; open the treasures of grace to them, if they will receive them; agree with them for nothing but faith for justification, and profession of it for their salvation.

This *commission* is set out by the parable of a king commanding his servants to fetch the maimed, halt, and blind, with their wounds, sores, and infirmities about them, Luke 14:21, 23. "Bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Yea, and go out into the highways, and hedges, and those loathsome persons, those dregs of mankind, which you shall find swarming with vermin, and cleansing themselves under every hedge, bring them in; if they pretend their rags and nastiness as unsuitable to my rank and quality, compel them, force them against their own natural inclinations and doubts, that my house may be filled. God will have heaven filled with such, when self-righteous persons refuse him. When you come to heaven to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you will find some and a great many, that were once as filthy morally, as these hedge-birds were naturally, who had once as many lusts creeping about them as there were frogs in Egypt. Such a compulsion as this spoken of, there was in the primitive times by the power of the Spirit of grace. Two stage-players, that in their acting scoffed at the Christian religion, were converted, and proved martyrs; one under Dioclesian, the other under Julian.

6. The practice of the Spirit *after Christ's ascension*, to lay hold of such persons.

1. Some out of the *worst families* in the world; one out of Herod's, Acts 13:1. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets, and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul." Either Herod Antipas, who ridiculed Christ before Pilate; or Herod Agrippa, who put James to death; which of these Herods it was, it was not likely that in such a family he should imbibe any principles advantageous to the Christian religion. For being brought up with him, he was either his playfellow when young, or his confident when grown up; yet out of this family of this wicked prince he calls out one, to make not only an object of his mercy, but an instrument of it to others, contrary to the force of education, which usually roots bad principles deep in the heart. It is likely to this intent the Holy Ghost takes particular notice of the place of Manaen's education, when the families, where the rest named with him were bred up, are not mentioned.



[ [ [ [ [ , such sins. Persons not only committing some few acts of them, but so habituated in them, that they seemed metamorphosed into the very nature of these sins themselves; so that they were become the very dirt, mud, and rubbish of hell. Yet you see devils he really turned into angels of light. Well then, how many flinty rocks has God dissolved into a stream of tears? How many hard hearts has he made to bleed and melt? That which is now pure gold, had been earthy and polluted.

I shall only add this to the whole. Great sins are made preparations by God to some men's conversion, not in their own nature, that is impossible: but by the wise disposal of God, which Mr Burges illustrates thus: As a child whose coat is but a little dirty, has it not presently washed, but when he comes to fall over head and ears in the mire, it is taken off, and washed immediately; the child might have gone many a day with a little dirt, had not such an accident happened. Peter might have had his proud and vain-glorious humour still, had he not fallen so foully in the denial of his Master; but when he fell into the privy, it promoted his conversion: for so Christ calls it. "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke 17:32. It was conversion in a new edition; and you do not find him in the same boasting vanity again.

David's falling into the sin of murder and adultery is the occasion of the ransacking his soul, which you find him not so hot about another time: he digs all about to the very root. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psalm 51:5. This sin had stirred and raked up all the mud in his heart, and made him see himself an abominable creature: therefore, he desires God to "hide his face from his sins," ver. 9; he was so loathsome, he would not have any one look upon him (fling all this mud out of my soul), and prays more earnestly for a new heart and a right spirit. So when a wicked man falls into some grievous sin, which his conscience frowns upon him and lashes him for, he looks out for a shelter, which in all his peaceable wickedness he never did.

2. Why God *chooses the greatest sinners*, and lets his elect run on so far in sin before he turns them.

1. There is a *passive disposition* in the greatest sinners, more than in moral or superstitious men, to see their need: because they have not any self-righteousness to boast of. Man's blameless outward carriage and freedom from the common sins of the times and places wherein they live, many times proves a snare of death to them, and makes them more cold and faint towards Christ: because they possess themselves with imaginations that Christ cannot but look upon them, though they never so much as set their faces toward him. And because they are not drenched in such villanies as others are, their consciences sit quiet under this moral carriage, and gall them not by any self-reflections. Therefore when the threatenings of the law are denounced against such and such sins, these men wipe their mouths, being untainted from those sins that are thus cursed, and vainly glory in their gay and gaudy plumes, and bless God with the Pharisee, that they are not sinners of such a scarlet dye, and that they do such and such duties, and so go on without seeing a necessity of the new birth. By this means the strength of sin is more compacted and condensed in them.

Superstitious and formal men are hardly seduced to their right wits: partly because of a defect in reason from whence, those extravagances arise, and partly because of these false habits and spirit of error possessing their faculties, they are incapable of more noble impressions. Besides, they are more tenacious of the opinions they have sucked in, which have got the empire and command over their souls; such misguided zeal fortifies men against proposals of grace, and fastens them in a more obstinate inflexibleness to any converting motions. This self-righteous temper is like an external heat got into the body, which produces a persistant fever, and is not easily perceived till it be incurable; and naturally it is a harder matter to part with self-righteousness than to part with gross sins; for that is more deeply rooted upon the stock of self-love, a principle which departs not from us without our very nature. It has more arguments to plead for it; it has a natural conscience, as a patron for it. Whereas a great sinner stands speechless at reproofs, an outward law-keeper has the strong reinforcement of natural conscience within his own breast. It was not the gross sins of the Jews against the light of nature, so much as the establishing the idol of their own righteousness, that was the block to hinder them from submitting to the righteousness of God, Rom. 10:8.

Christ came to his own, and his own received him not, John 1:11. Those that seem to have his particular stamp and mark upon them, that had their heads in heaven by some kind of resemblance to God in moral righteousness, being undefiled with the common pollutions of the world: these received him not, when publicans and harlots started ahead of them, and ran before them, to catch hold of the offers of grace. "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." Matt. 21:31. Just as travellers that have loitered away their time in an alehouse, being sensible how the darkness of the night creeps upon them, spur on, and outstrip those that were many miles on their way, and get to their stage before them. So these publicans and harlots which were at a great distance from heaven, arrived there before those who, like the young man, were not far off from it.

Great sinners are most easily convinced of the notorious wickedness of their lives; and reflecting upon themselves because of their horrid crimes against the light of nature, are more inclinable to endeavour an escape from the devil's slavery, and are frightened and shaken by their consciences into a compliance with the doctrine of redemption; whereas those that do by nature the things contained in the law, are so much a law to themselves, that it is difficult to persuade them of the necessity of conforming to another law, and to part with this self-law in regard to justification. As metals of the noblest substance are hardest to be polished; so men of the most noble, natural, and moral endowments are with more difficulty argued into a state of Christianity than those of more drossy modes of living. Cassianus speaks very peremptorily in this case; *frequenter vidimus de frigidis et carnalibus ad spiritualem venisse fervorem, de lepidis et animalibus nunquam*; that is, often have we seen the cold and carnal warmed into a spiritual fervour; the dainty and the brutish never.

2. The *insufficiency* of nature to such a work as conversion is, shows that men may not fall down and idolize their own wit and power. A change from acts of sin to moral duties may be done by a natural strength and the power of natural conscience: for the very same motives which led to sin, as education, interest, profit, may,

upon a change of circumstances, guide men to an outward morality; but a change to the contrary grace is supernatural.

Two things are certain in nature. (1.) Natural inclinations never change, but by *some superior virtue*. A loadstone will not cease to draw iron, while that attractive quality remains in it. The wolf can never love the lamb, nor the lamb the wolf; nothing but must act suitably to its nature. Water cannot but moisten, fire cannot but burn. So likewise the corrupt nature of man being possessed with an invincible contrariety and enmity to God, will never suffer him to comply with God. And the inclinations of a sinner to sin being more strengthened by the frequency of sinful acts, have as great a power over him, and as natural to him, as any qualities are to natural agents: and being stronger than any sympathies in the world, cannot by a man's own power, or the power of any other nature equal to it, be turned into a contrary channel.

(2.) Nothing can act *beyond its own principle and nature*. Nothing in the world can raise itself to a higher rank of being than that which nature has placed it in; a spark cannot make itself a star, though it mount a little up to heaven; nor a plant endue itself with sense, nor a beast adorn itself with reason; nor a man make himself an angel. Thorns cannot bring forth grapes, nor thistles produce figs because such fruits are above the nature of those plants. So neither can our corrupt nature bring forth grace, which is a fruit above it. *Effectus non excedit virtutem suae causae* [the effect cannot exceed the power of its cause]: grace is more excellent than nature, therefore cannot be the fruit of nature. It is Christ's conclusion, "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" Matt. 12:33, 34. Not so much as the buds and blossoms of words, much less the fruit of actions. They can no more change their natures, than a viper can do away with his poison. Now though this I have said be true, yet there is nothing man does more affect in the world than a self-sufficiency, and an independence from any other power but his own. This attitude is as much riveted in his nature, as any other false principle whatsoever. For man does derive it from his first parents, as the prime legacy bequeathed to his nature: for it was the first thing uncovered in man at his fall; he would be as God, independent from him. Now God, to cross this principle, allows his elect, like Lazarus, to lie in the grave till they stink, that there may be no excuse to

ascribe their resurrection to their own power. If a putrefied rotten carcass should be brought to life, it could never be thought that it inspired itself with that active principle. God lets men run on so far in sin, that they do unman themselves, that he may proclaim to all the world, that we are unable to do anything of ourselves towards our recovery, without a superior principle. The evidence of which will appear if we consider,

1. Man's *subjection* under sin. He is "sold under sin," Rom. 7:14, and brought "into captivity to the law of sin," ver. 23. "Law of sin:" that sin seems to have a legal authority over him; and man is not only a slave to one sin, but many, Tit. 3:3, "serving divers lusts." Now when a man is sold under the power of a thousand lusts, every one of which has an absolute tyranny over him, and rules him as a sovereign by a law; when a man is thus bound by a thousand laws, a thousand cords and fetters, and carried whither his lords please, against the dictates of his own conscience and force of natural light; can any man imagine that his own power can rescue him from the strength of these masters that claim such a right to him, and keep such a force upon him, and have so often baffled his own strength, when he attempted to turn against them?

2. Man's *affection* to them. He does not only serve them, but he serves them, and every one of them, with delight and pleasure; Tit. 3:3. They were all pleasures, as well as lusts; friends as well as lords. Will any man leave his sensual delights and such sins that please and flatter his flesh? Will a man ever endeavour to run away from those lords which he serves with affection? having as much delight in being bound a slave to these lusts, as the devil has in binding him. Therefore when you see a man cast away his pleasures, deprive himself of those comfortable things to which his soul was once knit, and walk in paths contrary to corrupt nature, you may search for the cause anywhere, rather than in nature itself. No piece of dirty, muddy clay can form itself into a neat and handsome vessel; no plain piece of timber can fit itself for the building, much less a crooked one. Nor a man that is born blind, give himself sight.

God deals with men in this case as he did with Abraham. He would not give Isaac while Sarah's womb, in a natural probability, might have borne him; but when her womb was dead, and age had taken away all natural strength of conception, then God gives him;

that it might appear that he was not a child of nature, but a child of promise. I have been the larger on these two heads (which I design rather as things premised than reasons) because these two principles of civil righteousness and self-sufficiency are the great impediments to conversion, and natural to most men.

## A Discourse of the Pardon of Sin

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.”—Psalm 32:1, 2.*

This psalm, as Grotius thinks, was made to be sung upon the annual day of the Jewish expiation, when a general confession of their sins was made. It is one of David’s penitential psalms, supposed to be composed by him after the murder of Uriah, and the pronouncing of his pardon by Nathan, ver. 5, and rather a psalm of thanksgiving. It is called *Maschil*, a psalm of understanding. *Maschil* is translated *eruditio, intelligentia*, and notes some excellent doctrine in the psalm, not known by the light of nature. Blessed, blessednesses. *Ex omni parte beatus* (blessed in every way). Three words there are to discover the nature of sin, and three words to discover the nature of pardon.

*Transgression.* Prevarication. Some understand by it sins of omission and commission.

*Sin.* Some understand those inward inclinations, lusts, and motions, whereby the soul swerves from the law of God, and which are the immediate causes of external sins.

*Iniquity.* Notes original sin, the root of all. Three words that note pardon.

*Levatus, forgiven, eased,* signifies to take away, to bear, to carry away. Two words in Scripture are chiefly used to denote remission, to expiate; to bear or carry away: the one signifies the manner whereby it is done, viz., atonement; the other the effect of this expiation, carrying away: one notes the meritorious cause, the other the consequent.

*Covered.* Alluding to the covering of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Menochius thinks it alludes to the manner of writing among the Hebrews, which he thinks to be the same with that of the Romans; as writing with a pencil upon wax spread upon tables, which when they would blot out, they made the wax plain, and drawing it over the writing, covered the former letters. And so it is equivalent with that expression of ‘blotting out sin,’ as in the other allusion it is with ‘casting sin into the depths of the sea.’

*Impute.* Not charging upon account. As sin is a defection from the law, so it is forgiven; as it is offensive to God’s holiness, so it is covered; as it is a debt involving man in a debt of punishment, so it is not imputed; they all note the certainty, and extent, and perfection of pardon: the three words expressing sin here, being the same that are used by God in the declaration of his name, Exod. 34:7. Here are to be considered,

- I. The nature of pardon.
- II. The author of it, God.
- III. The extent of it, transgression, sin, iniquity.
- IV. The manner of it, implied, by faith in Christ.

The apostle quoting this place, Rom. 4:7, to prove justification by faith; as sin is not imputed, so something is imputed instead of it. Covering implies something wherewith a thing is covered, as well as the act whereby it is covered.

- V. The effect of it, blessedness.

I shall not divide them into distinct propositions, but take the words in order as they lie.

- I. The nature of pardon.
  1. Consider the words, and what notes they will afford to us.

(1.) Covering, as it alludes to the manner of writing, and so is the same with blotting out: Isa. 43:25, ‘I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgression;’ whereby is implied, that sin is a debt, and pardon is the remitting of it. It notes,

[a.] The nullity of the debt. A crossed book will not stand good in law, because the crossing of the book implies the satisfaction of the debt. A debt may be read in our manner of writing in a crossed book, but it cannot be pleaded. God may after pardon read our sins in the book of his omniscience, but not charge them upon us at, the bar of his justice.

[b.] God's willingness to pardon. Blots, not razeth. He engraves them not upon marble, he writes them not with a pen of iron, or point of a diamond; writing upon wax is easily made plain.

[c.] The extent of it. Blotting serves for a great debt as well as a small; a thousand pound may as well, and as soon, be dashed out by a blot as a thousand pence.

[d.] The quickness of it upon repentance. It takes more time to write a debt in a book, than to cross it out; one blow would obliterate a great deal of writing upon wax. Sins that have been contracting many years, when God pardons, he blots out in a moment.

(2.) Covering, as it alludes to the drowning the Egyptians, is expressed by casting into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19, 'Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.'

This notes also,

[a.] God's willingness to pardon. Casts them, not lays them gently aside, but flings them away with violence, as things that he cannot endure the sight of, and is resolved never to take notice of them more.

[b.] God's reality in pardon. He will cast their sins as far as the arm of his omnipotency can reach; if there be any place further than the depths of the sea, thither they shall be thrown out of the sight of his justice.

[c.] The extent. *All* their sins. The sea covered Egyptian princes as well as the people. The mighty lord, as well as the common soldier, sank like lead in those mighty waters.

[d.] The duration of it. The sea vomits up nothing that it takes into its lower bowels; things cast into the depths of the ocean never appear more. Rivers may be turned and drained, but who can lave out the ocean?

(2) Not imputing. Not putting upon account, not charging the debt in a legal process. To this is equivalent the expression of not remembering: Isa. 43:25, 'I will not remember their sins.' An act of oblivion is passed upon sin. This notes,

(1.) That God will not exact the debt of thee. God doth not absolutely forget sin, for what he knows never slips out of his knowledge. So that his not remembering is rather an act of his will than a defect in his understanding. As when an act of oblivion is passed, the fact committed is not physically forgotten, but legally, because the fear of punishment is removed. God puts them out of the memory of his wrath, though not out of the memory of his knowledge. He doth remember them paternally to chastise thee for them, though not judicially to condemn thee.

(2.) Not upbraid thee. Not with a scornful upbraiding mention them to cast thee off, but with a merciful renewing the remembrance of them upon thy conscience, to excite thy repentance, and keep thee within the due bounds of humility and reverence.

2. More particularly the nature of pardon may be explained in these propositions. We must not think that these expressions, as they denote pardon, do intimate in this act the taking away of the being of sin, nature of sin, or demerit of sin.

1. The being and existence of sin is not taken away. Though sin be not imputed to us, yet it is inherent in us. The being remains, though the power be dethroned. By pardon God takes away sin, not as it is a pollution of the soul, but as it is an inducement to wrath. Though remission and sanctification are concomitants, yet they are distinct acts, and wrought in a distinct manner.

2. The nature of sin is not taken away. Justification is a relative change of the person, not of the sin; for though God will not by an act of his justice punish the person pardoned, yet by his holiness he cannot but hate the sin, because though it be pardoned, it is still contrary to God, and enmity against him. It is not a change of the native malice of the sin, but a non-imputation of it to the offender. Though the person sinning be free from any indictment, yet sin is not freed from its *malitia*, and opposition to God. For though the law doth not condemn a justified person because he is translated into another state, yet it condemns the acts of sin, though the guilt of

those acts doth not redound upon the person, to bring the wrath of God upon him. Though David had the sins of murder and adultery pardoned, yet this pardon did not make David a righteous person in those acts, for it was murder and adultery still, and the change was not in his sin, but in his soul and state.

3. The demerit of sin is not taken away. As pardon doth not alter sin's nature, so neither doth it alter sin's demerit, for to merit damnation belongs to the nature of it; so that we may look upon ourselves as deserving hell, though the sin whereby we deserve it be remitted. Pardon frees us from actual condemnation, but not, as considered in our own persons, from the desert of condemnation. As when a king pardons a thief, he doth not make the theft to become formally no theft, or to be meritoriously no capital crime. Upon those two grounds of the nature and demerit of sin, a justified person is to bewail it, and I question not but the consideration of this doth add to the triumph and hallelujahs of the glorified souls, whose chief work being to praise God for redemption, they cannot but think of the nature and demerit of that from which they were redeemed, Rev. 5:13.

4. The guilt of sin, or obligation to punishment, is taken away by pardon. Sin committed doth presently, by virtue of the law transgressed, bind over the sinner to death, but pardon makes void this obligation, so that God no longer accounts us persons obnoxious to him. *Peccatum remitti non aliud est quam non imputari ad poenam.* (For a sin to be pardoned is nothing else than not to imputed for punishment.) It is a revoking the sentence of the law against the sinner, and God renouncing, upon the account of the satisfaction made by Christ to his justice, any right to punish a believer, doth actually discharge him, upon his believing, from that sentence of the law under which he lay in the state of unbelief; and also as he parts with this right to punish, so he confers a right upon a believer humbly to challenge it, upon the account of the satisfaction wrought by his surety. God hath not only in his own mind and resolution parted with this right of punishing, but also given an express declaration of his will: 2 Cor. 5:19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,' i.e. openly renouncing upon Christ's account the right to punish, whence follows the non-imputation of sin, 'not imputing their trespasses unto them.' The

justice of God will not suffer that that sin which is pardoned should be punished, for can that be justice in a prince, to pardon a thief, and yet to bring him to the gallows for that fact? Though the malefactor doth justly deserve it, yet after a pardon and the word passed, it is not justly inflicted. God indeed doth punish for that sin which is pardoned. Though Nathan, by God's commission, had declared David's sin pardoned, yet the sword was to stick in the bowels of his family: 2 Sam. 12:10, 15, 'The sword shall never depart from thy house.' 'The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.' But,

(1.) It is not a punishment in order to satisfaction, because Christ's satisfaction had no flaw in it, and stood in need of nothing to eke it out; but it is for the vindication of the honour of God's holiness, that he might not be thought an approver of sin; and this was the reason of David's punishment in the death of his child by Bathsheba: 2 Sam. 12:14, 'Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.'

(2.) It is not so much penal as medicinal. A judge commands a hand to be cut off, that is for punishment; a physician and a father order the same, but for the patient's cure, and the preservation of the body. And though God after pardon acts not towards his people in the nature of a judge, yet he never lays aside the authority and affection of a father. We are delivered from a judge's wrath, but not from a father's anger. In that remarkable dumbness inflicted upon Zacharias for his unbelief, Luke 1:18, 20, there was a confirmation of his faith, as well as the chastisement of his incredulity. The angel, upon his unbelieving desire of a sign, gives him a testimony of the truth of his errand, but such an one that should make him feel in some measure the smart of his unbelief.

(3.) If it be penal, it is not the eternal punishment due to sin. It is but temporary, and not embittered by wrath, which is the gall of punishment.

This taking off the obligation to punishment is the true nature of pardon: which will be evident from 2 Sam. 19:19, 'Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me.' Shimei desires David not to impute iniquity, and not to remember it. It was not in David's power absolutely to forget it, and Shimei's confessing the fact with those circumstances in ver. 20, was enough to recall it to David's memory,

if he had forgot it; but he desires David not to bring him to satisfy the penalty of the law for reviling his sovereign.

II. The author of pardon, God. For pardon is the sovereign prerogative of God, whereby he doth acquit a believing sinner from all obligation to satisfactory punishment, upon the account of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith.

1. It is God's act. Remission is the creditor's, not the debtor's, act; though the debtor be obliged in justice to pay the debt, yet there is no obligation upon the creditor to demand the debt, because it is at his liberty to renounce or maintain his right to it; and God hath as much power as man to relax his right, provided it be with a salve to his own honour, and the holiness of his nature, which he cannot deny for the sinner's safety, as the apostle tells us 'God cannot deny himself.' Yet properly, say some, though sin be a debt, God is not to be considered in pardon as a creditor, because sin is not a pecuniary debt, but a criminal, and so God is to be considered as a governor, lawgiver, guardian, and executor of his laws, and so may dispense with the severities of them. If an inferior person tear an indictment, it may be brought again into court, but if the chief magistrate order the casting it out, who can plead it? It is God's act; and if God justifies, who can condemn? Rom. 8:33, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that, justifies, who shall condemn?' That God absolves thee that hath power to condemn thee; that God who enacted the law whereby thou art sentenced, proclaims the gospel whereby thou art reconciled. It is an offended God who is a forgiving God: that God whose name thou hast profaned, whose patience thou hast abused, whose laws thou hast violated, whose mercy thou hast slighted, whose justice thou hast dared, and whose glory thou hast stained.

2. It is not only his act, but his prerogative, and he only can do it. God is the party wronged. *Nemo potest remittere de jure alieno*. (No one is able to remit the judgement of another.) This prerogative he glories in as peculiar to himself; the thoughts of this honour are so sweet to him, that he repeats it twice, as a title he will not share with another: Isa. 43:25, 'I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions.' Pardoning offenders is one of a prince's royalties.



and perform by its light and heat the same operations. When mercy shews itself in state with all its train, it is but to usher in pardoning grace, Exod. 34:6, 7; not a letter, not an attribute that makes up the composition of that name, but is a friend and votary of mercy. And that latter clause a learned man explains of God's clemency; 'He will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers,' &c., which he renders thus: He will not utterly cut off and destroy; but, when he doth visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, it shall be but to the third or fourth generation, not for ever. This name of God is urged by Moses: Num. 14:17, 'Now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great; the Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity,' &c. 'Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of thy mercy.' Where Moses repeats this clause more particularly than he doth the other parts of his name; which surely he would not have done, and pleaded it as a motive to God to pardon Israel, if he had not understood it of God's clemency; for otherwise he had dwelt more upon the argument of justice than upon that of mercy, which had not been proper to edge his present petition with. Nay, it is such pure mercy, the genuine birth of mercy, that it partakes of its very name, as children bear the name of their father: Heb. 8:12, 'I will be merciful to their iniquity,' which in the prophet, Jer. 31:84, whence the apostle quotes it, is, 'I will forgive their iniquity.'

That it is so, will appear; because:

(1.) No attribute could be the first motive of pardon but this. His justice would loudly cry for vengeance, and flame out against ungrateful sinners. His holiness would make him abhor not only the embraces but the very sight of such filthy creatures as we are. His power would attend to receive and execute the commands of his justice and holiness, did not compassion stop in to qualify.

(2.) Unconstrained mercy. Men pardon many times because they are too weak to punish; but God lacks not power to inflict judgments, neither doth man lack weakness to sink under it: Rom. 5:6, 'When we were without strength, Christ died for us.' God lacked not sufficient reason to justify a severe proceeding, both in the quality of sin, every sin being a contrariety to the law, sovereignty, work, glory, yea, the very being of God. Now for God

to pardon that which would pull him out of his throne, hath blemished the creation, robs him of his honour, must be an act of the richest and purest mercy; and in the quantity, multitudes of sins of this cursed quality, as numerous as motes in the sunbeams. It is impossible for the nimblest angel to write down the extravagances of men committed in the space of twenty-four hours, if he could know all the operations of their souls as well as their outward actions; all those God doth see, *simul et semel*, and yet is ready to pardon in the midst of numberless provocations.

(3.) Resolved and designed mercy. It is not through inadvertency and insensibleness of the aggravating circumstances of them; God must needs know the nature and circumstances of all those sins he himself laid upon Christ; yea, God hath an actuated knowledge of all when he is about to pardon, Isa. 43:22. God reckons up their sins of omissions; they had been weary of him, and had not brought to him their small cattle; had preferred their lambs and kids before his service; wearied him with their iniquities; endeavoured to tire him out of the government of the world. What could one have expected after this black scroll, but fire-balls of wrath? Yet he blots them out, ver. 25, though all those sins were fresh in his memory. Nay, the name we have profaned becomes our solicitor: Ezek. 36:22, 'For my holy name's sake which you have profaned.'

(4.) Delightful and pleasant mercy. He delights in pardoning mercy, as a father delights in his children. He is therefore called the Father of mercy: Micah 7:18, 'He pardons iniquity, and retains not his anger for ever, because he delights in mercy.' Never did we take so much pleasure in sinning as God doth in forgiving; never did any penitent take so much pleasure in receiving, as God doth in giving, a pardon. He so much delights in it that he counts it his wealth: riches of grace, riches of mercy, glorious riches of mercy. No attribute else is called his riches. He sighs when he must draw his sword: Hosea 11:8, 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim!' but when he blots out iniquity, then it is, 'I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my name's sake.' His delight in this is equal to the delight he hath in his name. This is pure mercy, to change the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace, to bestow pardons where he might inflict punishments, and to put on the deportment of a father instead of that of a judge.

4. The act of his justice. Those attributes which seem contrary are joined together to produce forgiveness; yet God is not to be considered in pardon only as *judex* (judge), but *paternus judex* (a paternal judge). There is a composition of judge and father in this act; free grace on God's part, but justice upon the account of Christ. That God will accept of a satisfaction, is mercy; that he will not forgive without a satisfaction, is justice. Mercy forgives it in us, though justice did punish it in Christ. Christ by his death paid the debt, and God, by the resurrection of Christ, discharged the debt; and therefore the justice of God is engaged to bestow pardon upon a believer. God set forth Christ as 'a propitiation, that he might be just, and therefore a justifier of him that believes,' Rom. 3:26. Either the debt is paid or not; if not, then Christ's death is in vain. If it be, then God's justice is so equitable as not to demand a second payment. Therefore another apostle joins *faithful* and *righteous*. It might have been faithful and merciful, faithful and loving, but faithful and righteous, or just, takes in the attribute which is most terrible to man, 1 John 1:9, 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [ (righteous). Isaiah joins both together, 'a just God and a Saviour,' Isa. 45:21, so that here is unspeakable comfort. That which engaged God formerly to punish man, engageth him now to pardon a believer; that which moved him to punish Christ, doth excite him to forgive thee.

5. The act of his power. It is a sign of a noble and generous mind to pass over offences and injuries. Sick and indigent persons are the most peevish and impatient, and least able to concoct an injury. And when we kindle into a flame upon the least sparks of a wrong, the apostle tells us we are overcome of evil: Rom. 12:21, 'Be not overcome of evil.' We become captives to our angry passions. Speedy revenge in us being an act of weakness, the contrary must be an act of power over ourselves. God's not executing the fierceness of his anger, is laid upon his being a God and not man, Hosea 11:9. God's infinite power gives a rise to pardon: Micah 7:18, 'Who is a God like to thee, that pardons iniquity?' Junius and Tremellius render it, 'Who is a *strong* God?' and the Hebrew  will bear it. 'Let the power of my Lord be great,' saith Moses, Num. 14:17. The word *jigdal* is written with a great *jod*, to shew, say the Jews, that it is more than an ordinary power to command one's self when



the work, willingness to take a body, and willingness to lay down that body. He had as it were a fever of affection, a combustion in his bowels till it was finished. In his greatest agonies he did not repent of his undertaking, or desire to give it over. He cried indeed to his Father that this cup might pass from him, but he presently submits: If there be no other way to save sinners, I will pass on through death and hell to do it. When he was afflicted and oppressed, he murmured not at it: Isa. 53:7, 'He opened not his mouth, he opened not his mouth.' It is twice repeated, to shew his willingness. And God was highly pleased with him for this very reason, because he did 'pour out his soul,' and 'bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors;' all which expressions denote his earnestness and readiness in it.

(2.) By his resurrection. His death is the payment, his resurrection the discharge: Rom. 4:25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.' Not that we are formally justified by the resurrection of Christ, but that thereby God declared that whosoever believes in him should be justified upon that believing; for if Christ had not risen, there had been no certainty of the payment of the debt. In his death he pays the sum, as he is our surety; and in his resurrection he hath his *quietus est* (it is satisfied) out of God's exchequer. God will not have this payment from Christ, which he hath acknowledged himself publicly to be satisfied with, and from believers too; for upon his resurrection he sent him to bless men: Acts 3:26, 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.' How? 'In turning away every one of you from his iniquity,' it being a great encouragement to turn men from sin, when God hath thus declared them pardonable by the resurrection of his Son.

2. On our parts by faith. Faith is as necessary in an instrumental way, as Christ in a meritorious way: Acts 26:18, 'That they may receive forgiveness of sins by faith that is in me.' Christ purchaseth a pardon, but faith only puts us in possession of a pardon; yet it cannot from its own worth challenge forgiveness at the hands of God, but upon the account of Christ, who hath merited forgiveness. Though the king grants a pardon to a condemned malefactor, yet he may be executed unless he pleads it the next assizes, though he hath it lying by him; so unless we sue it out, and accept of it by faith, all

Christ's purchase will not advantage us. Faith looks not barely upon the sufferings of Christ, but upon his end and design in it. It looks not upon his passion as a story, but as a testament; and you seldom find the death of Christ mentioned in the New Testament without expressing the end of it. This forgiveness by Christ's death as the meritorious cause, shews,

(1.) God's willingness to pardon. If God did delight in the death of Christ, it was not surely simply in his death; for could a father delight to tear out the bowels of his son? The afflictions of his people go to his heart; much more would the sufferings of his darling. God had more delight in forgiveness than grief at his Son's sufferings; for he never repented it, though our Saviour besought him with tears; and that God who was never deaf to any that called upon him, nor ever will be, would not hear his only Son in the request to take the cup from him, or abate anything of the weight of his sufferings, because it was necessary for the pardon of sin, *necessitate decreti* (necessary according to the decree), if not *naturae* (according to its nature). God repented of making the world, but never of forgiving sin; so that the pardon of sin is more pleasing to him than the sufferings of his Son were grievous; otherwise whatsoever the Father would have done by instruments, yet surely he himself would not have been the executioner of him. But in this affair there were not only instruments, Judas to betray him, the Jews to accuse him, the disciples to forsake him, Pilate to condemn him, the soldiers to mock and crucify him, and thieves to revile him, but God himself: Isa. 53:10, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.' His own Father that loved him (as Abraham in the type) puts as it were the knife to the throat of his only Son, which surely God would not have done had not pardon of sin been infinitely pleasing to him. And how great a pleasure must that be, that swallowed up all grief at his Son's sufferings! Yea, he seemed to love our salvation more than he loved the life of his Son, since the end is always more amiable than the means, and the means only lovely as they respect the end.

(2.) The certainty of forgiveness. God must deny Christ's payment before he can deny thy pardon. God will not deny what his Son hath earned so dearly, and what he earned was for us and not for himself. Did God pardon many before Christ died, and will he not

pardon believing souls since Christ died? Some were certainly saved before the coming of Christ: upon what account? Not for their own righteousness; that is but a rag, and could not merit infinite grace. Not by the law; that thundered nothing but death, and condemned millions, but never breathed a pardon to one person. Or was it by their vehement supplications? Those could not make an infinite righteousness mutable; justice must be preferred before the cries of malefactors; and if those could have done it, God would not have been at the expense of his Son's blood. Therefore, it must be upon this account, Rom. 3:25, 'for the remission of sins that are past.' Did God pardon upon trust? And will he not much more upon payment? Did he forgive when there was only a promise of payment, and some thousands of years to run out before it was to be made? And will he not much more forgive, since he hath all the debt paid into his hands? Would God remit sin when Christ had nothing under his hand to shew for it? And now that he hath a public testimony and acquittance, will he not much more do it? Seeing his purging our sins, or expiating them by his death, was the ground of his exaltation to the honour of sitting at the right hand of God in our natures: Heb. 1:3, 'When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;' it is a certain evidence of the grant of pardon upon the account of this sacrifice to those that seek it in God's methods, since God hath shewn himself so pleased with it. For it is clear, that because Christ 'loved righteousness and hated iniquity,' *i.e.* kept up the honour of God's justice and holiness by the offering himself to death, that God hath given him a portion above all his fellows.

(3.) The extent of it. Both to original and actual sin: John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world;' sin of the world, the sin of human nature, that first sin of Adam. Of this mind is Austin, and others, that original sin is not imputed to any to condemnation since the death of Christ. But howsoever this be, it is certain it is taken away from believers as to its imputation. Christ was 'made sin for us,' 2 Cor. 5:21, to bear all sin. It had been an imperfect payment to have paid the interest, and let the principal remain; or to have paid the principal, and let the interest remain. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. 8:1, and therefore no damning matter or guilt left in arrear. It had been folly else for the apostle to have published a defying challenge

to the whole creation to have brought an indictment against a justified person (Rom. 8:33. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?'), if the least crime remained unremitted for the justice of God, the severity of the law, the acuteness of conscience, or the malice of the devil to draw up into a charge. Since the end of his coming was 'to destroy the works of the devil,' whereby he had acquired a power over man, he leaves not therefore any one sin of a believer unsatisfied for, which may continue, and establish the devil's right over him. If the redemption only of the Jews, with the exclusion of the Gentiles, in the first compact seemed to displease him, to shed his blood for small sins only would have been as little to his content, it had been too low a work for so great a Saviour to have undergone those unknown sufferings for debts of a smaller value, and to shed that inestimable blood for the payment of farthings, and leave talents unsatisfied. Certainly, God sent not his Son, but with an intention his blood should be improved to the highest uses for those that perform the covenant conditions, and that Father who would have us honour his Son as we honour himself, will surely honour his Son's satisfaction in the extensive effects of it, as he would honour his own mercy, since they are both so straitly linked together. And it is as much for the glory of Christ's satisfaction, as for the honour of his Father's mercy, to pass by the greatest transgressions.

(4.) The continuance of it. Thou art pardoned, and yet thou sinnest; but Christ hath paid and never runs more upon the score. Thou art pardoned and dost daily forfeit, and needest a daily renewal; but Christ hath purchased, and never sins away his purchase. God exacted a price suitable to the debt he foresaw men would owe him, for he knew how much the sum would amount unto. When he gave Christ, he intended him for the justification of many offences, Rom. 5:16. 'The free gift is of many offences unto justification,' speaking of the gift of God, ver. 15. And therefore since God cannot be mistaken in the greatness of the sum, because of his infinite knowledge, it had been a greater act of wisdom not to provide any remedy at all, than not to do it thoroughly. If the continuance of that imperfect remission of Adam and the patriarchs was drawn out for above three thousand years and more, and the enjoyment of happiness made good to them merely upon Christ's undertaking, surely it will be much more upon his actual



1. Perfect in respect of state. God retains no hatred against a pardoned person. He never imputes sin formally, because he no more remembers it, though virtually he may, to aggravate the offence a believer hath fallen into after his justification. So Job possessed the sins of his youth. And Christ tacitly put Peter in remembrance of his denial of him. The grant is complete here, though all the fruits of remission are not enjoyed till the day of judgment, and therefore in Scripture sin is said then to be forgiven. It is a question whether believers' sins will be mentioned at the day of judgment. Some think they will, because all men are to give an account. Methinks there is some evidence to the contrary. Our Saviour never mentioned the unworthy carriage of his disciples to him in his sufferings, and after his resurrection seems to have removed from him all remembrance of it. It is not to be expected, that a loving husband will lay open the faults of his tender spouse upon the day of the public solemnisation of the nuptials. But if it be otherwise, it is not to upbraid them, but to enhance their admiration of his grace. He will discover their graces as well as their sin, and unstop the bottles of their tears, as well as open the book of their transgressions. Our Saviour, upon Mary's anointing him, applauds her affection, but mentions not her former iniquity.

It must needs be perfect.

(1.) All God's actions are suitable to his nature. What God doth, he doth as a God. And is he perfect in his other works, and not in his mercy, which is the choicest flower in his crown? God sees blacker circumstances in our sins, than an enraged conscience or a malicious devil can represent; but God pardons not according to our apprehensions, which though great in a tempestuous conscience, yet are not so high as God's knowledge of it.

(2.) The cause of pardon is perfect. Both the mercy of God and the merits of Christ are immutably perfect. It is for his own glory, his own mercies' sake, that he pardons. He will not dim the lustre of his own crown, by leaving the effect of his glory imperfect, or satisfying the importunities of his mercy by halves. The saints in heaven have not a more perfect righteousness, whereby they continue their standing, than those on earth have; for, though inherent righteousness here is stained, yet imputed, upon which pardon is founded, is altogether spotless. A righteousness that, being

infinite in respect of the person, hath a sufficiency for devils, had it a congruity; but it hath both for us, because manifested in our natures.

2. In respect of the objects. Sinful nature, sinful habits, sinful dispositions, pardoned at once, though never so heinous.

(1.) For quality. There was no limitation as to the deepness of the wounds caused by the fiery serpents in the wilderness ; the precept of looking upon them, extended to the cure of all, let the sting reach never so deep, the wound be never so wide or sharp, and his sight be never so weak, if he could but cast his eye on the brazen one. The commission Christ gave to his disciples, was to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark 16:15, every human creature; the worst as well as the best. Though you meet with monstrous sinners in the likeness of beasts, and devils, except none from suing out a pardon in the court of mercy. The almightiness of his mercy doth as much transcend our highest iniquities, as it doth our shallowest apprehensions. Our sins, as well as our substance, are but as the dust of the balance, as easily to be blown away by his grace, as the other puffed into nothing by his power. No sin is excepted in the gospel, but that against the Holy Ghost, because it doth not stand with the honour of God to pardon them who wilfully scorn the means, and account the Redeemer no better than an impostor. No man can expect, in reason, he should be saved by mercy, who, by a wilful malice against the Son of God, tramples upon the free offers of grace, and provokes mercy itself to put on the deportment of justice, and call in revenging wrath to its assistance, for the vindication of its despised honour. The infinite grace of God dissolves the greatest mists, as well as the smallest exhalations, and melts the thick clouds of sin, as well as the little icicles.

(2.) The quantity. Hath God ever put a restraint upon his grace and promise, that we shall find mercy if we sin but to such a number, and no more? It is not agreeable to the greatness and majesty of God's mercy, to remit one part of the debt, and to exact the other. It consists not with the motive of pardon, which is his own love, to be both a friend and an enemy at the same time, in pardoning some, and charging others; and thus his grace would rather be a mockery and derision of men. Neither doth it consist with the end of pardon, which is salvation; for to give an half pardon is to give no salvation, since, if the least guilt remains unremitted, it gives

justice an unanswerable plea against us. What profit would it be to have some forgiven, and be damned for the remainder? Had any one sin for which Christ was to have made a compensation remained unsatisfied, the Redeemer could not have risen. So if the smallest sin remains unblotted, it will hinder our rising from the power of eternal death, and make the pardon of all the rest as a nullity in law. But it is the glory of God to pass by all: Prov. 19:31, 'It is his glory to pass over a transgression.' It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence. It is a discovery of an inward principle or property, which is an honour for a man to be known the master of. If it be his glory to pass by a single and small injury, then to pass by the more heinous and numerous offences, is a more transcendent honour, because it evidenceth this property to be in him in a more triumphant strength and power. So that it is a clearer evidence of the illustrious vigour of mercy in God, to pass by mountains and heaped up transgressions, than to forgive only some few iniquities of a lesser guilt: Jer. 33:8, 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, and whereby they have transgressed against me.' Therefore, when God tells the Jews that he would give them a general discharge in the fullest terms imaginable, to remove all jealousy from men, either because of the number, or the aggravations of their sins, he know not how to leave expressing the delight he had in it, and the honour which accrued to him by it: 'It shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and honour before all the nations of the earth.' He would get himself an honourable name by the large riches of his clemency. Mercy is as infinite as any other attribute, as infinite as God himself. And as his power can create incomprehensible multitudes of worlds, and his justice kindle unconceivable hells, so can his mercy remit innumerable sins.

8. Perfect in respect of duration. Because the handwriting of ordinances is taken away: Col. 2:14, 15, 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;' which was the ceremonial law, wherein they did, by their continual presenting sacrifices, and imposition of hands upon them, sign a bill or bond against themselves, whereby a conscience of sin was retained, Heb. 10:2, 8, and a remembrance of sin renewed. They could not settle the conscience in any firm place, Heb. 9:9; they were compelled to

do that every day, whereby they did confess that sin did remain, and want an expiation. Hence is the law called 'a ministration of condemnation,' 2 Cor. 3:9, because it puts them in mind of condemnation, and compelled the people to do that which testified that the curse was yet to be abolished by virtue of a better sacrifice. This handwriting, which was so contrary to us, was taken away, nailed to his cross, torn in pieces, wholly cancelled, no more to be put in suit. Whence, in opposition to this continual remembrance of sin under the legal administration, we read, under the New Testament, of God's remembering sin no more, Heb. 10:3, 17. Christ hath so compounded the business with divine justice, that we have the sins remitted, never returning upon us, and the renewal also of remissions upon daily sins, if we truly repent. For though there be a blacker tincture in sins after conversion, as being more deeply stained with ingratitude, yet the covenant of God stands firm, and he will not take away his kindness, Isa. 54:9, 10. And there is a greater affection in God to his children than to his enemies; for these he loves before their conversion with a love of benevolence, but those with a love of complacency. Will not God be as ready to continue his grace to those that are penitent, as to offer it to offending, rebels? Will he refuse it to his friends, when he entreats his enemies? Not that any should think that, because of this duration, they have liberty to sin, and, upon some trivial repentance, are restored to God's favour. No; where Christ is made righteousness, he is made sanctification. His spirit and merit go together. A new nature, and a new state, are concomitants; and he that sins upon presumption of the grand sacrifice, never had any share in it.

#### V. The effect of pardon. That is blessedness.

1. The greatest evil is taken away, sin, and the dreadful consequents of it. Other evils are temporal, but those know no period in a doleful eternity. There is more evil in sin, than good in all the creatures. Sin stripped the fallen angels of their excellency, and dispossessed them of the seat of blessedness. It fights against God, it disparages all his attributes, it deforms and destroys the creature, Rom. 7:13. Other evils may have some mixture of good to make them tolerable, but sin being exceedingly sinful, without the mixture of any good, engenders nothing but destruction and endless

damnation. Into what miseries, afflictions, sorrows, hath that one sin of Adam hurled all his posterity! What screechings, wounds, pangs, horrors, doth it make in troubled consciences! How did it deface the beauty of the Son of God, that created and upheld the world, with sorrow in his agonies, and the stroke of death on the cross! How many thousands, millions of poor creatures have been damned for sin, and are never like to cease roaring under an inevitable justice! Ask the damned, and their groans, yellings, howlings, will read thee a dreadful lecture of sin's sinfulness, and the punishment of it. And is it not then an inestimable blessedness to be delivered from that which hath wrought such deplorable executions in the world?

2. The greatest blessings are conferred. Pardon is God's family-blessing, and the peculiar mercy of his choicest darlings. He hands out other things to wicked men, but he deals out this only to his children.

(1.) The favour of God. Sin makes thee Satan's drudge, but pardon makes thee God's favourite. We may be sick to death, with Lazarus, and be God's friends; sold to slavery, with Joseph, and yet be dear to him; thrown into a lion's den, with Daniel, and be greatly beloved; poor, with Lazarus, who had only dogs to dress his sores, and yet have a title to Abraham's bosom. But we can never be beloved if we are unpardoned; no share in his friendship, his love, his inheritance, without a pardon. All created evils cannot make us loathsome in a justified state, nor all created goods make us lovely under guilt. Sin is the only object of God's hatred; while this remains, his holiness cannot but hate us; when this is removed, his righteousness cannot but love us. Remission and favour are inseparable, and can never be disjoined. It is by this he makes us as a diadem upon his head, a bracelet on his arm; it is by this he writes us upon the palms of his hands, makes us his peculiar treasure, even as the apple of his eye, which nature hath so carefully fenced.

(2.) Access to God. A prince may discard a favourite for some guilt, and though he may restore him to his liberty in the commonwealth, yet he may not admit him to the favour of his wonted privacies. But a pardoned man hath an access to God, to a standing and perpetually settled grace: Rom. 5:1, 2, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access.' Guilt frights us, and makes us loathe

the very sight of God; pardon encourageth us to come near to him. Guilt respects him as a judge; pardon, as a friend. Who can confidently or hopefully call upon an angry and condemning God? But who cannot but hopefully call upon a forgiving God? Sin is the partition wall between God and us, and pardon is the demolishing of it. Forgiveness is never bestowed, but the sceptre is held out to invite us to come into God's presence. And what can be more desirable than to have not only the favour of, but a free access at any time to, the Lord of heaven and earth, and at length an everlasting being with him?

(3.) Peace of conscience. There must needs be fair weather when heaven smiles upon us. All other things breed disquietness. Sin was a thorn in David's crown; his throne and sceptre were but miserable comforters, while his guilt overwhelmed him. The glory of the world is no sovereign plaster for a wounded spirit. Other enjoyments may please the sense, but this only can gratify the soul. God's thunder made Moses tremble, Heb. 12:21; but the probability of a gracious pardon would make a damned soul smile in the midst of tormenting flames. How often hath the sense of it raised the hearts of martyrs, and made the sufferers sing, while the spectators wept I though this, I must confess, is not always an inseparable concomitant. There is much difference between a pardon and the comfort of it; that may pass the seal of the king without the knowledge of the malefactor. Pardon, indeed, always gives the *jus ad rem*, a right to peace of conscience, but not always *jus in re*, the possession of it. There may be an actual separation between pardon and actual peace, but not between pardon and the ground of peace.

(4.) It sweetens all mercies. Other mercies are a ring, but pardon is the diamond in it. A justified person may say, I have temporal mercies and a pardon too; I live in repute in the world, and God's favour too; riches increase, and my peace with God doth not diminish. I have health with a pardon, friends with a pardon, as Job, chap. 29:3, 6, 7; among all other blessings this he counts the chiefest, that God's candle shined upon his head. A prisoner for some capital crime may have all outward accommodations for lodging, diet, attendance, without a real happiness, when he expects to be called to his trial before a severe judge, from whom there is no appeal, and that will certainly both pass, and cause to be executed, a

sentence of death upon him. So, though a man wallows in all outward contents, he cannot write himself blessed, while the wrath of God hangs over his head, and he knows not how soon he may be summoned before God's tribunal, and hear that terrible voice, 'Go, thou cursed.' What comfort can a man take in houses, land, health, when he considers he owes more than all his estate is worth? So, what comfort can a man have in anything in this world, when he may hourly expect an arrest from God, and a demand of all his debts, and he hath not so much as one farthing of his own, or any interest in a sufficient surety? We may have honour and a curse, wealth and a curse, children and a curse, health and long life and a curse, learning and a curse, but we can never have pardon and a curse. Our outward things may be gifts, but not blessings, without a pardon.

(5.) It sweetens all afflictions. A frown with a pardon is better than a thousand smiles without it. Sin is the sting of crosses, and remission is a taking the sting out of them. A sight of heaven will mitigate a cross on earth. The stones about Stephen's ears did scarce afflict him, when he saw his Saviour open heaven to entertain him. To see death staring us in the face, and an angry and offended God above, ready to charge all our guilt, is a doleful spectacle. 'Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins,' saith the psalmist, Ps. 25:18. Sin doth embitter, and adds weight to an affliction, but the removal of sin doth both lighten it and sweeten it.

*Use I.*

An unpardoned man is a miserable man. Such a state lays you open to all the miseries on earth, and all the torments in hell. The poorest beggar with a pardon is higher than the greatest prince without it. How can we enjoy a quiet hour, if our debt be not remitted, since we owe more than we are able to pay? You may die with a forfeited reputation, and yet be happy; but what happiness, if you die with unpardoned guilt?

(1.) There must either be pardon or punishment. The law doth oblige either to obedience or suffering. the commands of it must be observed, or the penalty endured. God will not relax the punishment without a valuable consideration. If it be not executed, the creature may accuse God of want of wisdom in enacting it, or defect of

power in maintaining it. Therefore there must be an exact observance of the law, which no creature after the first deviation is able to do; or an undergoing the penalty of it, which no sinner is able to bear. There must therefore be a remission of this punishment for the good of the creature, and the satisfaction of the law by a surety, for the honour of God's justice. If we have not therefore an interest in the surety, the purchaser of remission, we must lie under the severity of the law in our persons.

(2.) You can call nothing an act of God's love towards you, while you remain unpardoned. What is there you do enjoy, which may not consist with his hatred as well as his love? Have we knowledge? So have devils. Have we riches? So had Nabal and Cain. Have we honour? So had Pharaoh and Herod. Have we sermons? So had Judas, the best that ever were preached. Nothing, nothing but a pardon, is properly a blessing. How can that man take pleasure in anything he hath, when all the threatenings in the book of God are so many arrows directed against him?

(3.) All the time thou livest unpardoned, thy debts mount the higher. Every new sin is an adding a figure to the former sum, and every figure after the three first adds a thousand. Every act of sin adds not only the guilt proper to that single act upon it, but draws a new universal guilt from all the rest committed before, because the persisting in any one sin is a renewed approbation of all the former acts of rebellion committed against God.

(4.) It is that God, who would have pardoned thee if thou wouldst have accepted of it, who will condemn if thou dost utterly refuse it. It is that God thou hast provoked, offended, and dishonoured. That power which would have been manifested in forgiving thee, will be glorified in condemning thee. That justice which would have signed thy absolution, if thou hadst accepted of its terms, will sign the writ of execution upon thy refusal of them. Nay, the mercy that would have saved thee, will have no compassion on thee. The law condemns thee, because thou hast transgressed it, and mercy will reject thee, because thou hast despised it. The gospel, wherein pardon was proclaimed, will acquit others, but condemn thee. God would be false to his own word, if, after thy slighting so many promises of grace and threatenings of wrath, thou shouldst be spared.

*Use 2. Of comfort.*

Pardon of sin may make thee hope for all other blessings. Hath God done the hardest, and will he stick at the easiest? Hath he overthrown mountains, and shall molehills stop him? It is an easier thing to waft thee to heaven, than it was at first to remit thy guilt: Rom. 5:10, 'For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.' To this the death and resurrection of the Son of God was necessary, and there was to be a coming together and agreement made between mercy and justice. But since this is completed, the Redeemer saves thee by his life; since he hath died for thy remission, there is no need of his dying for thy further salvation. Seeing he hath made manifestation of his pardoning grace unto thee, he will not cease till he hath brought thee into a perfect state. For to what purpose should the creditor forgive the smaller part of the debt, and cast the creditor into prison for an unpayable sum.

(1.) If once pardoned, thou wilt be always pardoned. For the first pardon Christ paid his blood, for the continuance he doth but plead his blood, and we cannot be without a pardon till Christ be without a plea. He merited the continuance as well as the first remission. Will our Saviour be more backward to intercede for pardon, than he was to bleed and pray for it on earth? Would not our dearest Saviour let sin go unremitted, when he was to contest with the Father's wrath? And will he let it go unpardoned when he is only to solicit his Father's mercy? Thou shalt not want the daily renewals of it, since he has only to present his blood in the most holy place, seeing an ignominious and painful death did not scare him from the purchase of it upon the cross. As God's heart is more ready to give than we are to ask forgiveness, so is Christ's heart more ready to plead for the continuance of it, than we are daily to beg it; for he loves his people more than they can love him, or love themselves. Our praying is according to self-love, but Christ's intercession is according to his own infinite love, with a more intense fervency.

(2.) Thou art above the reach of all accusations. Shall the law condemn thee? No. Thou art 'not under the law, but under grace.' And if grace hath forgiven thee, the law cannot sentence thee. Shall conscience? No. Conscience is but the echo of the law within us:

that must speak what God speaks. God's Spirit and a believer's spirit are joint witnesses: Rom. 8:16, 'For the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.' Conscience is sprinkled by the blood of Christ, which quite changeth the tenor of its commission. Will God condemn thee? No. That were to lose the glory of all his pardoning mercy hitherto conferred upon thee; that were to fling away the vast revenue grace hath all this while been gathering for him; yea, it were to deny his own covenant and promise. Shall Christ condemn thee? No. That were to discard all his offices, to undo his death, and belie his merits. Did he sweat and bleed, pray and die for thee, and will he now condemn thee? Hath he been pleading for thee in heaven all this time, and will he now at the upshot cast thee off? Shall we imagine the severity of a judge more pleasing to him than the charity of an advocate, since his primary intention in coming was to save the world, not to condemn it? No. It would not be for his honour to pay the price and to lose the purchase.

(3.) There will be a solemn justification of thee at the last day. Thou art here pardoned in law, and then thou shalt be justified by a final sentence; there is a secret grant here, but a public manifestation of it hereafter. Thy pardon was passed by the Spirit of God in thy own conscience, it will then be passed by the Son of God in thy own hearing. That Saviour that did merit it upon his cross, will pronounce it upon his throne. The book shall be laid out of sight; there shall be no more writing in the book of God's omniscience to charge thee, or of thy conscience to affright thee. His fatherly anger shall for ever cease; and as all disposition to sin, so all paternal correction for it shall be for ever abolished, and forgiveness be fully complete in all the glorious effects of it.

(4.) Faith doth interest as in all this, though it be weak. The grant of a pardon doth not depend upon the strength of faith, though the sense of a pardon doth. A weak faith, as a palsy person, may not so well read a pardon, though it may receive it. As a strong faith gives more glory to God, so it receives more comfort from him. Christ made no difference in his prayer, John 17, between the feeblest and stoutest believer. His lambs as well as sheep were to be fed by his apostle with gospel comforts; and oven those lambs, Isa. 40:11, he himself carries in his bosom. Strong faith doth not entitle us to it

because it is strong, or a feeble faith debar us from it because it is weak; but it is for the sake of a mighty Saviour that we are pardoned. It is the same Christ that justifies thee as well as Abraham, the father of the faithful; it is the same righteousness whereby thou art justified as well as Paul and the most beloved disciple.

*Use 3.* Of examination.

Consider whether your sins are pardoned. Will you examine whether your estates are sure, and will you not examine whether your souls are sure?

Here I shall, 1, remove false signs whereon men rest, and think themselves pardoned.

(1.) The littleness of sin is no ground of pardon. Oh, some may say, my sins are little; some tricks of youth, some petty oaths, or the like. The Scripture saith that drunkards, fornicators, extortioners, and covetous, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; not great drunkards only, but those that are drunk but now and then, as well as those that are drunkards every day.

[a.] Dost thou know the malignity of the least sin? No sin can be called absolutely (though it may comparatively) little. Is it a little God who is offended by sin? Is it a little wrath which is poured down on sin? Is it a little Christ that hath died for sin? Is it a little soul that is destroyed by sin? And is it a little hell that is prepared for sin? Is not the least sin *deicidium*, as much as in a man lieth, a destroying of God? Did not Christ shed his blood for the least as well as for the greatest? Is not hell kindled by the breath of the Lord for the least as well as the greatest sins? Is that little which is God's burden, Christ's wound, the Spirit's grief, the penitent's sorrow, and the devil's hell? Every drop of poison is poison, every drop of hell is hell, every part of sin is sin, and hath the destroying and condemning nature of sin. Can angels expiate the least sin, or can a thousand worlds be a sufficient recompence for the injury that is done to God by the least sin?

[b.] The less thy sin, the less the excuse for thyself. It is the aggravation of their injustice, that they 'sold the righteous for a pair of shoes,' Amos 2:6. Dost thou undervalue God so as to sell a righteous and eternal God so cheap, for a little sin? Is a little sin

dearer to thee than the favour of the great God? Is a little sin dearer to thee than an eternal hell is grievous? To endanger thy soul for a trifle, to lose God for a bubble, is a confounding aggravation of it; as it was of Judas his sin, that he would sell his Saviour for a little silver, for so small a sum. Sin is not little in respect of the formality of it, but in respect of the matter, in respect of the temptation; and this littleness is an aggravation of sin.

[c.] Dost thou know how God hath punished the least sin? A drop of sin may bring a deluge of misery. An atom of sin is strong enough to overturn a world. It was but an apple that poisoned Adam and his whole posterity. Less sins are punished in hell than are pardoned here. God casts off Saul for less sins than he pardoned David for. How many ships have been destroyed upon small sands as well as great rocks!

(2.) Fewness of sins is no argument of pardon. Conceive, if thou canst, the amiableness and lustre of the angels, how far beyond the glory of the sun it was; yet one sin divested them of all their glory. It was but one sin kindled hell for the fallen angels; every sin must receive 'a just recompence of reward,' Heb. 2:2. Shall one single sin entitle thee to hell, what will millions of sins then entitle thee to? One sin is too much against God. Had thy iniquities, been never so few, Christ must have died to answer the pleas of his Father's justice against thee. Every sin is rebellion against God as a sovereign, undutifulness to God as a father, contempt of God as a governor, and preferring the devil before God; the devil that would damn thee, before God that made thee and preserves thee; a preferring the devil's temptations before God's promises.

(3.) The commonness of sin is no argument of pardon. Many angels combined in the first conspiracy against God; but as they were companions in sin, so are they companions in torments. The commonness of Sodom's sin made the louder cry, and hastened the severer judgment; not one inhabitant escaped, but only righteous Lot and his family. Common sins will have common plagues. It doth rather aggravate thy sin than plead for pardon, when thou wilt rather follow men's example to offend God than conform to God's law to please him. Sin was common in the old world, for 'all flesh had corrupted their ways,' Gen. 6:12; and all were swept away by the destroying deluge. To walk according to the course of the world, is

so far from being a foundation of pardon, that it is made a character of a child of the devil. To walk according to the course of the world, is to walk according to the pattern of the devil, and to be in the number of the children of wrath: Eph. 2:2, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.'

(4.) Forbearance of punishment is no argument of pardon: Eccles. 8:11, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Forbearance if made use of by men, to make them sin more desperately, more headily. 'Fully set..' all checks silenced and stopped. Forbearance is no acquittance; it argues not God's forgiving the debt; the debt is due, though it be not presently sued for; and the longer the debt remains unpaid, the greater sum will the interest amount to; because the longer God doth forbear punishment, the longer time thou hast for repentance; the account for that time will run high.

That God doth not punish, is an argument of his patience, not of his pardoning mercy. God laughs at sinners; he sees their day is coming, though they may be merry and confident of a pardon. God's forbearance may be justice; he may be brewing the cup and mixing that which thou art to drink. Prisoners may be reprieved one assize, and executed the next; reprieve of execution is no allowance of the crime, or change of the sentence.

(5.) Prosperity is no sign of pardon. Oh, I am not only borne with, and forborne; but I have a great addition of outward contentments since my sin That which you make an argument of pardon, may be an argument of condemnation. Asaph was much troubled at the prosperity of the wicked; but at last saith, 'Pride compasseth them as a chain, and violence covers them as a garment,' Ps. 73:6. That kindness which should have made them melt, made them presume; that which should broach thy repentance, inflames thy pride; thy goods may increase thy sins.

(6.) Forgetfulness of thy sin, and commission long ago, is no sign of pardon; and therefore having no checks for them, is no sign of pardon. God doth not forget, though thou dost; no sin slips from the memory of his knowledge, though now he doth cast many sins

away from the memory of his justice. In regard of God's eternity, the first sins are accounted as committed this moment; for in that there is no succession of time, and the sins thou hast committed twenty years ago, are as fresh as if thou hadst acted them all since thy coming into the congregation. Joseph's brethren, Gen. 37:25, laboured to wipe out the thoughts of their late cruelty by their eating and drinking, when the cries and tears of their brother were fresh in their memory, and might have damped their jollity. His affliction troubled them not; his relation to them, his youth, and their father's love to him, could not make them relent. But twenty-two years after, conscience began to fly in their faces, when awakened by a powerful affliction, Gen. 42:21. Is not thy conscience oftentimes a remembrancer to thee of thy old forgotten sins, and doth it not turn over the old records thou hadst quite forgot?

(7.) Hopes of God's mercy are no grounds of thy being pardoned. God's mercy is not barely enough, for then Christ needed not have died for sin; nor Christ's death enough, without the condition of that covenant whereby God will make over the interest and; merits of his death to thee. God's mercy must be considered, but in God's own way. God is merciful, but his mercy must not abolish his truth. Doth not a judge's mercy consist with condemning a malefactor? God hath been merciful to thee, and thou wouldst not accept of it; thou wouldst not hear mercy speak in a day of grace, why then should not justice speak in a day of vengeance? Thou wouldst not hear a God of mercy when he cried to thee, how then should mercy hear thee when thou comest to beg?

2. Some false grounds why those that are pardoned think themselves not pardoned.

(1.) Great afflictions are not signs of an unpardoned state. Moses had sinned by unbelief, Aaron by making a golden calf; God pardoned their sin, but took vengeance on their inventions: Ps. 99:8, 'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance.' Nathan, in his message to David, brings at once both pardon and punishment. The sin is removed, but the sword must still stick in the bowels of his family: 2 Sam. 12:13, 14, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.'

God may afflict temporally, when he resolves not to punish eternally. What! because he will not condemn thee as a judge, will he not chastise thee as a father? We may well bear a scourge in one hand, when we have a pardon sealed in the other. God pardons thy sin, but there is need of affliction to subdue that stout, stubborn heart of thine. God doth visit with rods when he is resolved not utterly to take away his loving-kindness from a people, Ps. 89:82, 83.

(2.) Terrors of conscience are no sign of an unpardoned state. We find a pardoned David having broken bones and a racked conscience after Nathan had pronounced his pardon, when there was no remorse before, Ps. 51. He had the grant of a pardon, but the comfort of a pardon was wanting. God may scorch thy soul when he gives a pardon, not that justice is thereby satisfied, but sin more embittered to thee. By a pardon thou dost relish his mercy, and by the torments thou mayest have in thy soul, thou wilt understand his justice. He shews thee what he freely gives, but he would have thee know what thou hast fully deserved; he gives thee pardon, but gall and wormwood with it, that thou mayest know what the purchase of it did cost thy Saviour. The physic which heals, causeth pain. That physic which doth not make thee sick, is not like to bring thee health. God pardons thee, that thou mayest be saved; he terrifies thee withal, that thou mayest not be induced by temptations to sin.

(3.) Sense of sin is no argument of an unpardoned state. A pardon may be granted when the poor condemned man expects to be haled out to execution. Mary stands weeping behind her Saviour when Christ was declaring her pardon to Simon; that much was forgiven her, and afterwards Christ turns to her, and cheers her with the news of it, Luke 7:44-47. He pronounceth her pardon, ver. 48, and the comfort of it: ver. 50, 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' The heavens may drop, when now and then the sun may steal a beam through the clouds. There may be a pardon where there are not always the sensible effects of a pardon. We find, after the stilling of a storm, the ragings and rollings of the sea. A penitent's wound may ache afresh when a Saviour's blood drops in mercy.

(4.) The remainders of sin are not a sign of an unpardoned state. Though a disease be mastered by physic, there may be some grudgings of it in a person. Though sin be pardoned, yet the dregs of sin will be remaining, and sometimes stirring. Christ hath enlivened

us, not by wholly destroying, but pardoning, sin. Pardon takes away the guilt of sin, grace takes away the power of sin, but neither pardon nor infusion of grace takes away the nature, and all motions of sin; for in purging out an humour, some dregs still remain behind: Col. 2:18, ‘And you hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.’

### 3. What are the true signs of a pardoned man?

(1.) Sincerity in our walk. A spirit without guile is made the character of a pardoned man in the text. There may be failings in the life, yet no guile in the heart; such a man is a pardoned man. A heart that hath no mixtures, no pretences or excuses for sin, no private reserves for God; a heart that, as the needle in a compass, stands right for the interest and glory of God, and answers to the profession as an echo to the voice; a heart that would thrust out any sin that harboured there, would not have an atom of any filth odious to the eye of God lurk there. Where this sincerity is, a willingness and readiness to obey God (which is the condition of the covenant), the substance of the covenant is kept, though some particular articles of it may be broken. Grace, the pardoning grace of God, is with them that love Christ in sincerity: Eph. 6:24, ‘Grace be with all them that love Christ Jesus in sincerity.’ Not a man excluded that is sincere, though he hath not so sparkling a flame as another, yet, if he be sincere, the crown of pardoning grace, and that of consummating grace, will be set upon his head.

(2.) Mourning for sin. A tender heart is a sign of a pardoned state, when sin discontents thee, because it displeaseth God. What showers of tears did Mary Magdalene weep after a pardon! Love to God, like a gentle fire, sets the soul a-melting. Tears that come from love are never without pardoning mercy. God’s bowels do first stir our mournings. It is impossible a gracious heart can read a pardon with dry eyes; it is the least it thinks it can do, as it were, like Mary Magdalene, to wash Christ’s feet with its tears, when it hath been washed itself with Christ’s blood. The soul cannot enough hate that which God hath been merciful in the pardon of. Forgiveness is like the warmth of the spring; it draws out the sap of the tree, the tears of the soul, which else would scarcely stir. If God hath given thee repentance, it is sure enough that he hath given thee a pardon; for if

he did not mean to give thee that, he would never have given thee the other.

(3.) Fearfulness of sin. Whosoever knows the bitterness of sin, and the benefit of a pardon, can never confidently rush into it. A pardoned man will never go about to forfeit that which he hath newly received. Forgiveness from God doth produce fear in the creature: Ps. 130:4, 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' It is a sign we have repented and got pardon, if we find, after that exercise of repentance and prayer, our hatred of sin increaseth, especially of that sin we wore guilty of before.

(4.) Sanctification. God never pardons but he subdues sin: Micah 7:19, 'He will subdue our iniquity, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' Both are put together. In the Lord's prayer, desires to be rid of all evil, and not to be led into any temptation, follow immediately upon the desire of pardon. A justified person and a sanctified nature are inseparable: Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;' there is pardon, but how shall I know that I am pardoned? If you 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' We never sincerely desire pardon, but we desire purging; and God never gives the one, but he bestows the other. If thou hast an interest in a pardoning Christ, thou wilt have the effects of a sanctifying Spirit. Where God's grace forgives an sin, he will give us grace to forsake all sin. It is his covenant to turn away ungodliness, when he takes away the punishment of sin: Rom. 11:26, 27, 'The Deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' The applications of God's grace to us are attended with the infusions of God's grace into us. When he puts his law into the heart, he remembers sin no more, Jer. 31:33, 34.

(5.) Forgiving others. In the Lord's prayer we pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Our Saviour comments upon this petition, to shew that pardon cannot be without this condition in Mat. 18, from ver. 23 to the 35th. Christ makes it at least a *causa sine qua non* of pardon: Luke 11:4, 'And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.'

(6.) Affectionate love to God and Christ. When we desire to glorify him by his grace, as well as be glorified by it. It is the injury

done to God by our sins which doth most affect that heart upon which the Spirit of God is poured: Zech. 12:10, 'They shall mourn over him, or be in bitterness for him.' The soul is more concerned for Christ than for itself. When there is too much of self in our desires for it, God delays the manifestation of it to the heart, that we may come up to purer strains. Christ certainly shed his blood for their remission, who are willing to shed theirs for his glory. Else Christ, whose glory it is to outstrip the hottest affection of his creature, would be behind-hand with him in love. That soul that would spend its all upon Christ, he will not suffer to stand long sobbing before him, Luke 7:47.

Use 4. Of exhortation.

(1.) To those who are careless of it. Oh, by all means seek it! Will it at last comfort thee to think of thy mirth and pleasures, how honourable, how rich, or how well stored with friends thou hast been? What should take up thy heart, busy thy thoughts, or employ thy endeavours, but this that concerns thy eternal state? Wilt thou sin away the time of God's patience, and thine own happiness? Is it not a time which God hath allotted thee to get a pardon in? What would Cain, Judas, Pilate, Herod, and all the black regiment, give for the very hopes of it? Oh prize that here which thou wilt hereafter esteem infinitely valuable, and call thyself fool and madman a thousand times, for neglecting the opportunity of getting! The anger of a king is as the roaring of a lion; what then are the frowns of an infinitely just God? Why is thy strength and affection spent about other things? Would a forlorn malefactor leading to execution listen cheerfully to anything but the news of his prince's clemency? Seek it,

[a.] Earnestly. Pardon is an inestimable blessing, and must not be sought with faint and tired affections.

[b.] Presently. Is it not full time seriously to set about it? Thou hast lost too many days already, and wilt thou be so senseless as to let another slip? How knowest thou but if thou dost refuse it this day, thou mayest be incapable of it to-morrow? There is but a step, a few minutes, between thee and death, and delays in great emergencies are dangerous.

[c.] Universally. Content not yourselves with seeking a pardon for grisly, staring sins, which fright the conscience with every look, but seek the pardon of your inward secret spiritual sins; while you beg most for the pardon of those, sanctifying grace will come in as well as justifying; the more you pray against the guilt of them, the more you will hate the filth of them.

(2.) To those that seek a pardon, and yet are in doubt of it. Secure sinners, that understand not the evil of sin, think it is an easy thing, and that forgiveness will be granted of course. But those that groan under the burden of their iniquity, imagine it more difficult than indeed it is. Presumption wrongs God in his justice, and every degree of despair or doubting, in his mercy.

[a.] God is willing to pardon. Ephraim doth but desire that God would turn him, and God presently cries out, 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?' Jer. 31:18, 20. 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.' A penitent Ephraim is instantly a pleasant child. Ephraim strikes upon his thigh with confession, and God speaks to his heart with affection. God doth, as it were, take the words out of Ephraim's mouth, as though he watched for the first look of Ephraim towards him, or the first breath of a supplication. God is more willing to pardon sin than we are to sin; because we sin with reluctancy, natural conscience checking us, but God hath no check when he goes to pardon. He 'waits to be gracious,' Isa. 30:18, 'therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you: and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.' He hath waited all the time of your sinning, to have an opportunity to show grace to you; and now you give it him by repenting, will he lose the fruit of his waiting? It is the end of Christ's exaltation, whether it be meant of his being lifted up on the cross, or his exaltation in heaven; it is true of both, that his end is to have mercy upon you.

[b.] God will pardon the greatest sins. His infinite compassion cannot exhaust itself by a frequent remission. Mercy holds proportion to justice; as his justice punisheth little sins as well as great, so doth mercy pass by great sins as well as little. Your highest sins are the sins of men, but the mercy offered is the mercy of a God.



transgressions unto the Lord: and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' God stood as ready to forgive David's unrighteousness, as he was ready to confess it. Mercy will not save a man without making him sensible of, and humbled for, his iniquity. Put thy business, therefore, into Christ's hands, and submit to what terms he will impose upon thee.

[b.] In thy supplications plead his glory. You find this the constant argument the people of God in the Scripture use for the prevailing with God for forgiveness. That argument is most comfortably pleaded, which God loves most, and whereunto he orders all his actions. No stronger motive can be used to him to grant it, than that whereby he excites himself to bestow it. When thou beggest other things, thou mayest dishonour God; but God cannot be a loser of his glory in granting this. Lord, if thou turnest me into hell, where is the glory of thy mercy upon thy creature? Nay, where is the glory of thy justice, my eternal torments not being able to compensate the injury done to thee by sin, so much as the suffering of thy only Son, whose death I desire to share in, and whose terms I am willing to submit to?

*Use 5. Exhortation to those that are pardoned.*

1. Admire this grace of God. To pardon one sin is a greater thing than to create a world; to pardon one sin is greater than to damn a world. God can create a world without the death of a creature; he can damn a world without the death of a creator; but in pardoning there must be the death of the creator, the Son of God.

2. Serve God much. Is the guilt of sin, the cord that bound thee, taken off? It is fit that when thou art so unfettered, thou shouldst run the ways of God's commandments. A sense of pardon of sin makes the soul willing and ready to run upon God's errands, and to obey his commandments: Isa. 6:8, 'I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? Then said I, Here am I.' Then when he had received assurance that his iniquity was taken away, ver. 7, God's pardon set thee upon a new stock, and therefore he expects thou shouldst be full of new clusters.

3. Be more fearful of sin. Dispute with thyself, Hath God pardoned the guilt of sin that it shall not damn me, and shall I wallow in the mire of sin to pollute myself? Oh, thy sins after

pardon have a blacker circumstance than the sins of devils, or the sins of wicked men, for theirs are not against pardoning mercy, not against special love. Oh, thaw thy heart every morning with a meditation on pardon, and sin will not so easily freeze it in the daytime. When thou art tempted to sin, consider what thoughts thou hadst when thou wert suing for pardon, how earnest thou wert for it, what promises and vows thou didst make, and consider the love God showed thee in pardoning. Do not blur thy pardon, so easily wound thy conscience, or weaken thy faith.

4. Be content with what God gives thee. If he gives thee heaven, will he deny thee earth? He that bestows upon thee the pardon of sin, would surely pour into thy bosom the gold of both the Indies, were it necessary for thee. But thou hast got a greater happiness; for it is not said, Blessed is he that wallows in wealth, honour, and a confluence of worldly prosperity, but, 'Blessed is he whose sin is forgiven, and whose iniquity is covered.'

## God's Regard for His Own Glory, Seen in the Saving of Sinners

*"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." —1 Tim. 1:15*

1. The glory of his patience. We wonder, when we see a notorious sinner, how God can let his thunders still lie by him, and his sword rust in his sheath. And, indeed, when such are converted, they wonder themselves that God did not draw his sword out, and pierce their bowels, or shoot one of his arrows into their hearts all this while. But God, by such a forbearance; shews himself to be God indeed, and something in this act infinitely above such a weak creature as man is: 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man,' Hosea 11:9. When God had reckoned up their sins before, and they might have expected the sentence after the reading the charge, God tells them, he would not destroy them, he would not execute them, because he was God. If he were not a God, he could not keep himself from pouring out a just vengeance upon them. If a man did inherit all the meekness of all the angels and all the men that ever were in the world, he could not be able to bear with patience the extravagances and injuries done in the world the space of one day; for none but a God, *i.e.* one infinitely longsuffering, can bear with them.

Not a sin passed in the world before the coming of Christ in the flesh, but was a commendatory letter of God's forbearance, 'To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,' Rom. 3:25. And not a sin passed before the coming of Christ into the soul, but gives the same testimony, and bears the same record. And the greater number of

sins, and great sins are passed, the more trophies there are erected to God's longsuffering; the reason why the grace of the gospel appeared so late in the world, was to testify God's patience. Our apostle takes notice of this long-suffering towards himself in bearing with such a persecutor. 'Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him,' 1 Tim. 1:16. This was Christ's end in letting him run so far, that he might shew forth not a few mites, grains, or ounces of patience, but all longsuffering, longsuffering without measure, or weight, by wholesale; and this as a pattern to all ages of the world; [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [ for a type: a type is but a shadow in respect of the substance. To shew, that all the ages of the world should not waste that patience, whereof he had then manifested but a pattern.

A pattern, we know, is less than the whole piece of cloth from whence it is cut; and as an essay is but a short taste of a man's skill, and doth not discover all his art, as the first miracle Christ wrought, of turning water into wine, as a sample of what power he had, was less than those miracles which succeeded; and the first miracle God wrought in Egypt, in turning Aaron's rod into a serpent, was but a sample of his power which would produce greater wonders; so this patience to Paul was but a little essay of his meekness, a little patience cut off from the whole piece, which should always be dealing out to some sinners or other, and would never be cut wholly out till the world had left being. This sample or pattern was but of the extent of a few years; for Paul was but young, the Scripture terms him a young man, Acts 7:58, about thirty-six years of age, yet he calls it all longsuffering. Ah, Paul! Some since have experienced more of this patience; in some it has reached not only to thirty, but forty, fifty, or sixty years.

2. Grace. It is partly for the admiration of this grace that God intends the day of judgment. It is a strange place: 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day,' 2 Thess. 1:10. What, has not Christ glory enough in heaven with his Father? Will he come on purpose to seek glory from such worthless creatures as his saints are? What is that which glorifies Christ in them? It is the gracious work he has





(2.) Freeness of grace. None can entertain an imagination that Christ should be a debtor to sin, unless in vengeance, much less a debtor to the worst of sinners. But if Christ should only take persons of moral and natural excellencies, men might suspect that Christ were some way or other engaged to them, and that the gift of salvation were limited to the endowments of nature, and the good exercise and use of a man's own will. But when he puts no difference between persons of the least and those of the greatest demerit, but affecting the foulest monsters of sin, as well as the fairest of nature's children, he builds triumphal arches to his grace upon this rubbish, and makes men and angels admiringly gaze upon these infinitely free compassions, when he takes souls full of disease and misery into his arms. For it is manifest hereby that the God and Lord of nature is no more bound to his servant (as touching the gift of salvation), when she carries it the most smoothly with him, than when she rebels against him with the highest hand; and that Christ is at perfect liberty from any conditions but that of his own, viz. faith; and that he can and will embrace the dirt and mud, as well as the beauty and varnish of nature, if they believe with the like precious faith.

Therefore it is frequently God's method in Scripture, just before the offer of pardon, to sum up the sinner's debts, with their aggravations; to convince them of their insolvency to satisfy so large a score, and also to manifest the freeness and vastness of his grace: 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offering, &c., but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities,' Isa. 43:22-24. When he had told them how dirtily they had dealt with him, and would have made him a very slave to their corrupt humours; at the conclusion, when they, nor no creature else, but would have expected fire-balls of wrath to be flung in their faces; and that God should have dipped his pen in gall, and have writ their *mittimus* to hell, he dips it in honey, and crosses the debt; 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,' ver. 25. Could there be anything of merit here, when the criminal, instead of favour, could expect nothing but severity, there being nothing but demerit in him?

It is so free, that the mercy we abuse, the name we have profaned, the name of which we have deserved wrath, opens its mouth with pleas for us; 'But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went,' Ezek. 36:21. Not for their sakes. It should be wholly free; for he repeats their profaning of his name four times. This name he would sanctify, *i.e.* glorify. How? In cleansing them from their filthiness, ver. 25. His name, while it pleads for them, mentions their demerits, that grace might appear to be grace indeed, and triumph in its own freeness. Our sins against him cannot deserve more than our sufferings for him, and even they are not worthy of the glory which shall be revealed, Rom. 8:18.

(3.) Extent of his grace. The mercy of God is called his riches, and exceeding riches of grace. Now as there is no end of his holiness, which is his honour, neither any limits set to his power, so there is no end of his grace, which is his wealth; no end of his mines; therefore the foulest and greatest sinners are the fittest for Christ to manifest the abundant riches of his graces upon; for it must needs argue a more vast estate to remit great debts, and many thousands of talents, than to forgive some fewer shillings or pence, than to pardon some smaller sins in men of a more unstained conversation. If it were not for turning and pardoning mountainous sinners, we should not know so much of God's estate; we should not know how rich he were, or what he were worth. He pardons iniquities for his name's sake; and who can spell all the letters of his name, and turn over all the leaves in the book of mercy? Who shall say to his grace, as he does to the sea, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further?

As the heavens are of a vast extension, which, like a great circle, encompass the earth, which lies in the middle like a little atom, in comparison of that vast body of air and ether, so are our sins to the extent of God's mercy; 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,' Isa. 55:9. Men's sins are innumerable, yet they are but ciphers to the vast sums of grace which are every day expended; because they are finite, but mercy is infinite; so that all sins in the world put together cannot be of so large an extent as mercy; because

being every one of them finite, if all laid together, cannot amount to infinite.

The gospel is entitled ‘good-will to men;’ to all sorts of men, with iniquities, transgressions, and sins of all sorts and sizes. God hath stores of mercy lying by him. His exchequer is never empty ‘Keeps mercy for thousands,’ Exod. 34:7, in a readiness to deal it upon thousand millions of sins as well as millions of persons. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all that were before, have not wasted it; and if God were to proclaim his name again, it is the same still, for his name as well as his essence is unchangeable. His grace is no more tied to one sin than it is to one person; he has mercy on whom he will, and his grace can pardon what sins he will; therefore he tells them, Isa. 55:7, that he would multiply pardons. He will have mercy to suit every sin of thine, and a salve for every sore. Though thy sin has its heights and depths, yet he will heap mercy upon mercy, till he makes it to overtop thy sin. He will be as good at his merciful arithmetic as thou hast been at thy sinful, if thou dost sincerely repent and reform. Though thou multiply thy sins by thousands, where repentance goes before, remission of sin follows without limitation. When Christ gives the one, he is sure to second it with the other. Though aggravating circumstances be never so many, yet he will multiply his mercies as fast as thou canst the sins thou hast committed.

He hath a cleansing virtue and a pardoning grace for all iniquities and transgressions; ‘And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me,’ Jer. 33:8. It is three times repeated, to shew that his mercy should be as large as their sin, though there was not a more sinful nation upon the earth than they were. His justifying and sanctifying grace should have as vast an extension, for he would both pardon and cleanse them. Why? Ver. 9, that it might be a name of joy and praise, and an honour to him before all the nations of the earth.

It is so great, that self-righteous persons murmur at it, that such swines should be preferred before them; as the eldest son was angry that his father should lavish out his kindness upon the prodigal more than upon himself, Luke 15:28.

(4.) Compassion of his grace. The formal nature of mercy is tenderness, and the natural effect of it is relief. The more miserable the object, the more compassionate human mercy is, and the more forward to assist. Now that mercy which in man is a quality, in God is a nature. How would the infinite tenderness of his nature be discovered, if there were no objects to draw it forth? It would not be known to be mercy, unless it were shed abroad; nor to be tender mercy, unless it relieved great and oppressing miseries; for mercy is a quality in man that cannot keep at home, and be stowed under a lock and key in a man's own breast; much less in God, in whom it is a nature. Now the greater the disease, the greater is that compassion discovered to be wherewith God is so fully stored.

As his end in letting the devil pour out so many afflictions upon Job was to shew his pity and tender mercy in relieving him. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy, James 5:11; so, in permitting the devil to draw his elect to so many sins, it is the same end he drives at. And he is more pitiful to help men under sin than under affliction, because the guilt of one sin is a greater misery than the burden of a thousand crosses. If forgiveness be a part of tenderness in man, it is also so in God, who is set, Eph. 4:32, as a pattern of the compassion we are to shew to others: 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' The lower a man is brought, the more tender is that mercy that relieves him: 'Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low,' Psal. 79:8. To visit them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to pardon their sins, is called mercy, with this epithet of tender; 'Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,' Luke 1:77-79. And so it is indeed when he visits the most forlorn sinners.

(5.) Sincerity and pleasure of his grace. Ordinary pardon proceeds from his delight in mercy; 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy,' Micah 7:18. Therefore the more of his grace he lays out upon any one, the more excess of delight he hath in it, because it is a larger effect of that grace. If he were not sincere in it,

he would never mention men's sins, which would scare them from him rather than allure them to him. If he were not sincere, he would never change the heart of an enemy, and shew kindness to him in the very act of enmity; for the first act of grace upon us is quite against our wills. And man is so far from being active in it, that he is contrary to it. *In primo actionis*, it is thus with a man, though not *in primo actu*; for in the first act of conversion man is willing, though not in the first moment of that act. But for God to bestow his grace upon us against our wills, and when he can expect no suitable recompence from us, evidences the purity of his affection; that when he endured so many contradictions of sinners against himself day by day, yet he is resolved to have them, and does seize upon them, though they struggle and fly in his face, and provoke him to fling them off.

It is so much his delight, that it is called by the very name of his glory: 'The glory of the Lord shall follow thee,' Isa. 58:8; *i.e.* the mercy of the Lord shall follow them at the very heels. And when they call, it should answer them; and when they cry, he would, like a watchful guardian servant, cry out, Here I am. So that he never lets a great sinner, when changed into a penitent, wait long for mercy, though he sometimes lets them wait long for a sense of it. This mercy is never so delightful to him as when it is most glorious, and it is most glorious when it takes hold of the worst sinners. For such black spots which mercy wears upon its face, makes it appear more beautiful.

Christ does not care for staying where he has not opportunities to do great cures, suitable to the vastness of his power, Mark 6:5. When he was in his own country, he could do no great work there, but only laid his hands upon a few sick people. He had not a suitable employment for that glorious power of working miracles. So when men come to Christ with lighter guilt, he has but an under opportunity given him, and with a kind of disadvantage, to manifest the greatness of his charity. Though he has so much grace and mercy, yet he cannot shew more than the nature and exigence of the opportunity will bear; and so his pleasure doth not swell so high as otherwise it would do, for little sins, and few sins, are not so fit an object for a grace that would ride in triumph. Free grace is God's

darling, which he loves to advance; and it is never more advanced, than when it beautifies the most misshapen souls.

3. Power. The Scripture makes conversion a most wonderful work, and resembles it to creation, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead, &c.

(1.) Creation. Conversion, simply considered, is concluded by divines to be a greater work than creation; for God puts forth more power morally in conversion than he did physically in creation. The world was created by a word; but many words, and many acts, concur to conversion. The heavens are called the works of God's fingers, Ps. 8:8; but the gospel, in the effects of it, is called the arm of the Lord, Isa. 53:1. Men put not their arm to a thing but when the work requires more strength than the fingers possess. It is 'the power of God to salvation;' and the faith it works is begun and fulfilled with power, 2 Thess. 1:11. God created the world of nothing; *nothing* could not objectively contribute to his design, as matter does to a workman's intent; yet neither doth it oppose him, because it is nothing. As soon as God spake the word, this nothing brings forth sun, moon, stars, earth, trees, flowers, all the garnish of nature out of its barren womb. But sin is actively disobedient, disputes his commands, slights his power, fortifies itself against his entrance upon the heart, gives not up an inch of ground without a contest. There is not only a passive indisposition, but an active opposition. His creating power drew the world out of nothing, but his converting power frames the new creature out of something worse than nothing.

Naturally there is nothing but darkness and confusion in the soul. We have not the least spark of divine light, no more than the chaos had, when God, who commanded light to shine out of that darkness, 2 Cor. 4:6, shined in our hearts. To bring a principle of light into the heart, and to set it up in spite of all the opposition that the devil and a man's own corruption makes, is greater than creation. As the power of the sun is more seen in scattering the thickest mists that triumph over the earth, and mask the face of the heavens, than in melting the small clouds compacted of a few vapours, so it must needs argue a greater strength to root out those great sins that were twisted and inlaid with our very nature, and become as dear to us as our right eye and right hand, than a few sins that have taken no deep

root. Every man naturally is possessed with a hatred of God, and doth oppose everything which would restore God to his right; and being, since the fall filled with a desire of independency, which is daily strengthened with new recruits, and loath to surrender himself to the power and direction of another, it is a more difficult thing to tame this unruly disposition in man's heart, I say more difficult, than to annihilate him, and new create him again; as it is more easy oftentimes for an artificer to make a new piece of work, than to repair and patch up an old one that is out of frame.

(2.) Resurrection. Conversion simply is so called: 'Quickened us when we were dead,' Eph. 2:5. And the power that effects it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead; which was a mighty power, that could remove the stone from the grave, when Christ lay with all the sins of the world upon him, Eph. 1:19, 20; so the greater the stone is upon them, the greater is God's power to remove it. For if it be the power of God simply to regenerate nature, and put a new law into the heart, and to qualify the will with a new bias to comply with this law, and to make them that could not endure any thoughts of grace not to endure any thoughts of sin, it is a greater power sure to raise a man from that death wherein he has lain thirty or forty years rotten and putrefied in the grave; for if conversion in its own nature be creation and resurrection, this must needs be creation and resurrection with an emphasis.

The more malignant any distemper is, and the more fixed in the vital parts, and complicated with other diseases, the greater is the power in curing it; for a disease is more easily checked at the first invasion, than when it has infected the whole mass of blood, and become chronic; so it is more to pull up a sin, or many sins, that have spread their roots deep, and stood against the shock of many blustering winds of threatenings, than that which is but a twig, and newly planted.

(3.) Traction or drawing. Drawing implies a strength. If conversion be a traction, then more strength is required to draw one that is bound to a post by great cables, than one that is only tied by a few pack-threads; one that has millions of weights upon him, than one that hath but a few pounds.





*Hallelujah*, and sends up a volley of praises to God for the grace he hath obtained. And in that doxology he puts an emphasis on the wisdom of God: 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever,' ver. 17. Only wise God; only, which he does not add to any other attribute he there gives him.

This wisdom appears, (1.) In the subjects he chooseth. We will go no further than the example in our text. Our apostle seems to be a man full of heat and zeal. And the church had already felt the smart of his activity, insomuch that they were afraid to come at him after his change, or to admit him into their company, imagining that his fury was not changed, but disguised, and he of an open persecutor turned trepanner, Acts 9:26. None can express better what a lion he was than he doth himself: 'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities,' Acts 26:10, 11. He seems also to have been a man of high and ambitious spirit. This persecuting probably was acted so vigorously by him to ingratiate himself with the chief priests, and as a means to step into preferment, for which he was endued with parts and learning, and would not want zeal and industry to attain it. He seems to be of a proud spirit, by the temptation which he had: 'Lest I should be exalted above measure,' 2 Cor. 12:7. He speaks it twice in that verse, intimating that his natural disposition led him to be lifted up with any excellency he had; and usually God doth direct his battery to beat down that which is the sin of our constitution.

He was a man of a very honest mind, and was forward in following every point his conscience directed him to; for what he did against Christ, he did according to the dictates of his conscience, as then informed: 'I verily thought with myself,' Acts 26:9, *i.e.* in my conscience, 'that I ought,' not that I might, but that it was his duty. His error commanded with the same power that truth does where it reigns. Now it discovers the wisdom of God to lay hold of this man thus tempered, who had honesty to obey the dictates of a rightly-informed conscience, as well as those of an erroneous one; zeal to execute them, and height of spirit to preserve his activity

from being blunted by any opposition, and parts and prudence for the management of all these. I say, to turn these affections and excellencies to run in a heavenly channel, and to guide this natural passion and heat for the service and advancement of that interest which before he endeavoured to destroy, and for the propagation of that gospel which before he persecuted, is an effect of a wonderful wisdom; as it is a rider's skill to order the mettle of a headstrong horse for his own use to carry him on big journey.

(2.) This wisdom appears in the time. As man's wisdom consists as well in timing his actions as contriving the models of them, so doth God's. He lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his wonderful providences upon the stage. He hath his set time to deliver his church from her enemies, Ps. 102:13; and he hath his set time also to deliver every particular soul, that he intends to make a member of his church from the devil. He waits the fittest season to manifest his grace: 'Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you,' Isa. 30:18. Why? 'For the Lord is a God of judgment,' *i.e.* a God of wisdom; therefore will time things to the best advantage, both of his glory and the sinner's good. His timing of his grace was excellent in the conversion of Paul.

[a.] In respect of himself. There could not be a fitter time to glorify his grace than when Paul was almost got to the length of his chain; almost to the sin against the Holy Ghost. For if he had had but a little more light, and done that out of malice which he did out of ignorance, he had been lost for ever. He obtained mercy. Why? Because he did it ignorantly, ver. 13. As I said before, he followed the dictates of his conscience; for if he had had knowledge suitable to his fury, it had been the unpardonable sin. Christ suffered him to run to the brink of hell before he laid hold upon him.

[b.] In respect of others. He is converted at such a time when he went as full of madness as a toad of poison, to spit it out against the poor Christians at Damascus, armed with all the power and credential letters the high priest could give him, who without question promised himself much from his industry; and when he was almost at his journey's end, ready to execute his commission, And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus,' Acts 9:3, about half a mile from the city, as Gulielmus Tyrius thinks, at this very time Christ grapples with him, and overcomes all his mad principles,

secures Paul from hell, and his disciples from their fears of him. Behold the nature of this lion changed, just as he was going to fasten upon his prey. Christ might have converted Paul sooner, either when Paul had heard of some of his miracles, for perhaps Paul was resident at Jerusalem at the time of Christ's preaching in Judea, for he was brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts 13:3, who was one of the council, Acts 5:24. He might have converted him when he heard Stephen make that elegant and convincing oration in his own defence, Acts 7; or when he saw Stephen's constancy, patience, and charity in his suffering, which might somewhat have startled a moral man as Paul was, and made him look about him.

But Christ omits the doing of it at all these opportunities, and suffers him to kick against the pricks of miracles, admonitions, and arguments of Stephen and others, yet hath his eye upon him all along in a special manner, Acts 7:58. He is there named when none else are: 'And the witnesses laid their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul.' And 'Saul was consenting to his death,' Acts 8:1. Was there none else that had a hand in it? The Spirit of God takes special notice of Saul here. He runs in God's mind, yet God would not stop his fury: 'As for Saul, he made havoc of the church,' Acts 8:3. Did nobody else shew as much zeal and cruelty as Saul? Sure he must have some instrument with him. Yet we hear none named but Saul: and 'Saul yet breathing,' &c., Acts 9:1; yet, as much as to say, he shall not do so long. I shall have a fit time to meet with him presently.

And was it not a fit time, when the devil hoped to rout the Christians by him, when the high priests assured themselves success from this man's passionate zeal, when the church travailed with throws of fear of him? But Christ sent the devil sneaking away for the loss of such an active instrument, frustrates all the expectations of the high priests, and calms all the stormy fears of his disciples; for Christ sets him first a preaching at Damascus in the very synagogues which were to assist him in his cruel design: 'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God, and increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ,' Acts 9:20-22.

Did not Christ shew himself to be a God of judgment here? He sat watching in heaven for this season to turn Paul with the greatest advantage. His wisdom answers many ends at once, and killed so many birds with one stone. He struck dead at one blow Paul's sin, his people's fears, the high priests' expectations, and the devil's hopes. He triumphs over his enemies, secures his friends, saves Paul's soul, and promotes his interest by him he disappoints the devil of his expectations, and hell of her longing.

(3.) This wisdom appears to keep up the credit of Christ's death. The great excellence of Christ's sacrifice, wherein it transcends the sacrifices under the law, is because it perfectly makes an atonement for all sins; it first satisfies God, and then calms the conscience, which they could not do, Heb. 10:1, 2, for there was a conscience of sin after their sacrifices. The tenor of the covenant of grace which God makes with his people, is upon the account of this sacrifice, 'This is the covenant I will make with them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,' Heb. 10:16, 17. 'Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin,' ver. 18. This covenant extends not only to little sins, for there is no limitation; great sins are included; therefore Christ satisfied for great sins, or else, if ever they be pardoned, there must be another sacrifice, either of himself or some other, which the apostle, upon the account of this covenant, asserts there need not be, because this sacrifice was complete, otherwise there would be a remembrance of sin; as the covenant implied the completeness of Christ's satisfaction, so the continual fulfilling or application of the tenor of the covenant implies the perpetual favour and force of this sacrifice.

And, indeed, when God delivered him up, he intended it for the greatest sins: 'He was delivered for our offences,' Rom. 4:25, which signifies not stumbling, but falling. Not a light, but a great transgression. Now, if Christ's death be not satisfactory for great debts, Christ must be too weak to perform what God intended by him, and so infinite wisdom was frustrate of its intention, which cannot, nor ought not, to be imagined. Now, therefore, God takes the greatest sinners, to shew,

[a.] First, the value of this sacrifice. If God should only entertain men of a lighter guilt, Christ's death would be suspected to be too low a ransom for monstrous enormities; and that his treasure was

sufficient for the satisfaction of smaller debts, but a penury of merit to discharge talents; which had not been a design suitable to the grandeur of Christ, or the infiniteness of that mercy God proclaims in his word. But now the conversion of giant-like sinners does credit to the atonement which Christ made, and is a great renewed approbation of the infinite value of it, and its equivalency to God's demands; for it bears some analogy to the resurrection of Christ, which was God's general acquittance to Christ, to evidence the sufficiency of his payment. And the justification of every sinner is a branch of that acquittance given to Christ at his resurrection; 'Raised again for our justification,' Rom. 4:25; and a particular acquittance to Christ for that particular soul he had the charge of from his Father.

All that power that works in the first creation of grace, or the progress of regeneration, bears some proportion to the acquitting and approving power manifested in Christ's resurrection: 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,' Eph. 1:19, 20. In ver. 17, 18, the apostle prays for the carrying on the work of grace and regeneration begun in them, that they might more clearly understand that power which wrought in Christ, viz., that approving power of what Christ has done, which he exerts daily in conversion, and in the effects of it. For by raising any soul from a death in sin, God doth evidence the particular value of Christ's blood for that soul, as he did, in raising Christ, evidence the general fulness of that satisfaction. And this he will do even to the end of the world; raised us up together with Christ;' 'kindness through Christ Jesus,' Eph. 2:6, 7. All his grace in all ages, even to the end of the world, shall run through this channel, to put credit and honour upon Christ. Now the greater the sin is that is pardoned, and the greater the sinner is that is converted, the more it shews the sufficiency of the price Christ paid.

[b.] The virtue of this sacrifice. He is a 'priest for ever,' Heb. 7:17 and therefore the virtue as well as the value of his sacrifice remains for ever he hath 'obtained an eternal redemption,' Heb. 9:12, *i.e.* a redemption of an eternal efficacy. As long as men receive any venom from the fiery serpent, they may be healed by the

antitype of the brazen one, though it were so many years since he was lifted up. And those who were stung all over, as well as those who are bitten but in one part, may, by a believing looking upon him, draw virtue from him as diffusive as their sin.

Now the new conversion of men of extraordinary guilt proclaims to the world, that the fountain of his blood is inexhaustible; that the virtue of it is not spent and drained, though so much hath been drawn out of it for these five thousand years and upwards, for the cleansing of sins past before his coming, and sins since his death. This evidences that his priesthood now is of as much efficacy as his sufferings on earth were valuable; and that his merit is as much in virtue above our iniquity, as his person is in excellency above our nothingness. He can wash the tawny American, as well as the moral heathen; and make the black Ethiopian as white as the most virtuous philosopher. God fastens upon the worst of men sometimes, to adorn the cross of Christ; and maketh them eminent testimonies of the power of Christ's death: 'He made his grave with the wicked,' Isa. 53:9. God shall make man, wallowing in sinful pleasures, tied to the blandishments and profits of the world, to come to Christ, and comply with him, to be standing testimonies in all ages of the virtue of his sufferings.

(4.) For the fruitfulness of this grace in the converts themselves. The most rugged souls prove most eminent in grace upon their conversion, as the most orient diamonds in India, which are naturally more rough, are most bright and sparkling when cut and smoothed. Men usually sprout up in stature after shattering agues.



blackness of that darkness he sat in before, will endear the present splendour to him, swell up such a spring-tide of astonishment, as that there shall be no more spirit in him. God lets men sit long in the shadow of death, and run to the utmost of sin, before he stops them, that their danger may enhance their deliverance.

We admire more when we are pulled out of danger, than when we are prevented from running into it. A malefactor will be more thankful for a pardon, when it comes just as he is going to be turned off. If there be degrees of harmony in heaven, without question the convert thief on the cross warbles out louder notes than others, because he had little time to do it on earth; and his engagements are the greater, because Christ took him in his arms when he was hanging over hell.

When Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy, he was about fifty-five years of age; and yet those twenty years run out since his conversion had not stilled his admiration nor damped his thankfulness for converting grace. Take a prospect of it in this chapter: 'And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,' ver. 12, 13. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord. He seems to set his sin and God's mercy in opposition. I was injurious, but I obtained mercy. I was a blasphemer, but I obtained, &c. I—mercy. Who would imagine but that of all persons he should have passed by me, while he had taken this or that polished pharisee, this or that doctor of morality? But that he should overlook them, and set his eye upon me, so injurious, such a blasphemer, such a persecutor! A great sinner, when he reflects upon his sin, wonders that butt was not made at him. You find that no apostle gives such epithets to the grace of God as our apostle does; none so seraphical in his admiring expressions. Riches of grace, exceeding riches of grace, abundant grace, riches of glory, unsearchable riches of grace. He never speaks of grace without an emphasis. Single grace and single mercy would not serve his turn.

2. Love and affection. Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ had cast seven devils, was most early in her affection to bestow her provision of spices upon the dead body of her Saviour. The fire of grace cannot be stifled, but will break out in glory to God. This is such a grace that man in innocency could not have exercised in such

a height; because now the sinner is not only in his own sight unworthy of pardon, but worthy of the greatest hatred and punishment. You scarce find yourselves possessed with greater affection to any, than those who have been instruments to free you from your sinful fetters. How often do you bless them, could pull out your eyes for them, and think all ways too little to manifest the sense of your obligations to them! And does the instrument carry away all? Surely God has the greatest sacrifice of affection when the convert considers that his powerful grace was the principal agent to draw him out of this spiritual mire. As when a present is sent to you, you shew a courtesy to the servant; but the chief part of your kindness is devoted to the master that sent him. What flames of love, raptures of joy, transports of affection and boilings of courage for God in a young convert! The soul is most courageous for God at first conversion; because it is then most stored with comforts, and is so struck into amazement at the marvellous light which darts upon him, that he is ambitious to be a martyr for God presently: ‘After that you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions,’ Heb. 10:32. Grace is not only attended with afflictions, but bestows a courage upon a convert to endure them. The soul then thinks it is able to undergo anything for God, who hath bestowed so much grace upon it.

A Christian hath the greatest love to Christ at the first turning to him; for since the horror of all his sins, and the natural ugliness and deformity of that which he has served so long, comes with a full sense upon him, and since the admirable excellency of Christ shines upon him, which is a sight he was never acquainted with before, the greatness of the danger he was in, and the incomparable love which beams upon him from his believing a Saviour, fills his affection with full sails. Thus do men who have been tossed in a dangerous tempest, afflicted with the darkness of the night, as well as their danger, rejoice and welcome the rising sun in the morning, which dispels their tumultuous fears, as well as those gloomy shadows.

God permits a man’s sin to abound, that his love after pardon may abound too: ‘Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much,’ Luke 7:47; [ ] [ ] , *therefore*, it is the consequent, not the cause of remission. And this interpretation agrees best with the following words, ‘To whom little is forgiven, the same loves

little.' It is more consonant to reason, that where there are greater mercies, there should be greater returns of affection. Remission of sins is the greatest evidence of God's love, and therefore should be the greatest incentive of ours. And indeed Christ never appears to a penitent with a more comely air in his countenance than upon the removal of great judgments or the pardon of great sins: 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel,' Isa. 4:2. In that day! In what day? After great judgments, ver. 1; and in the foregoing chapter, in purging away great filth, ver. 4. The branch Jesus appears most lovely when he comes laden with the fruit of grace, with the sanctifying juice of his blood, as a ripe bunch of grapes looks pleasantly in a thirsty traveller's eye. This convert Paul was more affectionate to Christ than any of the other apostles; for when he could not look upon him, he is enamoured on his very name, and delights to express it no less than five hundred times, as I remember some have numbered it in his epistles; more, proportionably, than Peter, James, and John did in what they writ.

3. Service and obedience. Such will endeavour to redeem the time, because their former days have been so evil, and recover those advantages of service which they lost by a course of sin. They will labour that the largeness of their sin may be answered by an extension of their zeal. Such will be almost as much ashamed to do but common service as they are now ashamed of their scarlet sins. As men, the further they go backward, the greater leap they usually take forward. Grace instructs a man in holiness out of gratitude. The grace of God 'teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,' Titus 2:12. Grace teaches us. The greater the grace, the more pressing is the instruction: as it increases gratitude, it increases service.

That Peter, who had been so criminal in denying his Master, and adding perjury to his perfidiousness, was as active in service as he had been in apostasy. He laid the first stone of the Christian church among the Jews after Christ's ascension; he preached the first sermon to them, and charged them home with his Master's murder, Acts 2. He was also the spokesman in all business described in the first six chapters of the Acts. He laid also the first foundation of the

Gentile church; for God in a vision revealed to him the calling of the Gentiles, passing by all the other apostles, to whom it was not known but by Peter's relation: 'Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe,' Acts 15:7. A good while ago, which good while ago refers to the time, Mat. 16:18, wherein Christ said, 'Upon this rock will I build my church.' He was chosen by God to this purpose, *i.e.* separated from the rest of the apostles, and adorned with this prerogative. Great sins did not make Christ change his resolution.

Never an apostle that had been bred up under Christ's wing that was so active an instrument as this Paul, who had been so bitter an enemy. He 'laboured more abundantly than all,' 1 Cor. 15:10. In matters of obedience he would not ask counsel of flesh and blood: 'Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,' Gal. 1:16. He was quick in his obedience. He had endeavoured to weaken Christ's kingdom; he now endeavours to list men in his service. He had breathed out threatenings; he now breathes out affections. He could even spend and be spent for the interests of his Saviour. And usually we find converted souls most active in the exercise of that grace which is most contrary to that which was their darling sin.

4. Humility and self-emptiness. Christ 'chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty,' 1 Cor. 1:26, 27, that nothing should be attributed to their worth and dignity, but to his grace and mercy. Were the gospel discovered only to the wise, they would look upon it rather as a discovery made by the optics of their own reason. And if God did bestow his grace only upon men of unspotted conversations, they would rather think it a debt God stood obliged to pay them than a free act of grace. As God reveals knowledge to the simplest, Mat. 11:25, so he does manifest grace to the sinfullest; and as Christ blessed his Father for that, so no doubt but he doth return the same thanks for this. Such great sinners receive all from God, and so have more reason to hang down their heads; others may sometimes cast many a loving look to their own righteousness, and, like Nebuchadnezzar, glory, This is the Babylon which I have built; and boast of their good acts, and freedom from the common pollutions of the world.

But such who were fallen over head and ears in the mire, and were dirty all over, have no cause to boast; for God did not *find* them, but *made* them worthy. They brought nothing but dirt and rags, that were not worthy the washing only God would pick glory out of their worthlessness to his own grace. Such are sensible that God was not their debtor, but they his, and that there was nothing in them to oblige God to bestow the least mite of mercy on them.

Therefore we find not one of these mountainous sinners in Scripture ascribing their conversion to their own strength or merit. As no apostle was so God-magnifying, so none was so self-vilifying as Paul. Though he was the greatest apostle, yet he accounts himself less than the least of all saints: Eph. 3:8, 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints.' Surely he might have put himself equal to the least; it would have been great humility to do so; but he is more humble than so; even less than the least; less even than him who was only fit to be a door-keeper in the house of God. And he esteems himself not only unworthy of the office of an apostle, but of the very name; 'not worthy,' 1 Cor. 15:9, not only to be, but 'to be called an apostle.' And why? Because of his former sin; 'because I persecuted the church of God.' The remembrance of his great sin before his conversion kept him humble. And in ver. 10, when he had a little boasted of his abundant labour, he checks himself presently; 'Yet not I, but the grace of God.' He attributes his very being as a Christian, as well as his actions, to the same cause, viz. the grace of God; By grace I am what I am.' So, Gal. 1:16, how doth Paul attribute to grace 'pleased by his grace to reveal;' revelation, not acquisition.

5. Bewailing of sin, and self-abhorrence for it. When men are first translated out of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and begin to know Christ truly, the ways of their former ignorance are very bitter and uncouth things unto them. The very disproportion and unsuitableness of them to the sweetness of that grace which now they taste from the hand of Jesus is an offence to them, and hateful to their thoughts. Therefore the more sin a man hath run into before his return to God, the more he sees the vileness of his own nature, and consequently the more he abhors himself: 'Then shall you remember your iniquities, and shall loathe yourselves,' Ezek. 36:31. When? Ver. 29, when God had accomplished the promise of saving

them from all their uncleanness. They shall remember with abhorrency what was their own sin, and shall enjoy what is purely God's. The time of pardoning great sins is the time of great self-loathing; such prove the holiest persons, because they have had more experience of the evil of sin.

Such are ashamed of their sins, not only at the instant of their conversion, but afterwards, every time they remember them: 'What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?' Rom. 6:21. Now, at that time when Paul writ to them, the very shame of their sins stuck upon them, though they had been converted before. The more they grew in the experimental knowledge of God and his goodness, the more a holy shame for sins committed in their natural condition was stirred in their consciences, and they could not but blush every time they considered how dirty they had been towards God. Now the greater the shame, the greater the hatred of the occasion of that shame, and the more exact the watchfulness against it; as a man that hath fallen into some slough by some stumble or oversight, when he travels that way again, he cannot but remember what a pickle he was in, and will be watchful lest he meet with the same mishap. Whose heart was more melted by mercy than Mary Magdalene's? All the pharisees that Christ converted never rained such showers of tears. How she used all her instruments of sin to be servants to her repentance! Her eyes, which had inflamed so many hearts, been snares to catch men, she makes the conduits to convey her penitential tears to her Saviour's feet. Her hair, which had engrossed so much time in the curiosity of dresses, she uses as a towel to wipe them. The ointment she had used for the tricking up herself, to gratify the senses of her lovers, she pours out to embalm her Lord. Her lusts should have no more of her choicest things, but her Saviour should have all. She would keep them not so much for her own use, as his.

6. Faith and dependence. (1.) At present, in the instant of the first act of faith. Great sins make us appear in the court of justification, *sub forma impii*, with a naked faith, when we have nothing to merit it, but much to deserve the contrary: 'Believes on him that justifies the ungodly,' Rom. 4:5. The more ungodly, the more elevated is that faith which lays hold on God. Thomas's unbelief was very black, for he had refused to give credit to all the

testimonies of the disciples concerning Christ's resurrection; but when he was sensible of his crime, and so kindly dealt with by his Saviour, he puts forth a stronger act of faith than any of the rest: 'My Lord, and my God,' John 20:28. His faith was not satisfied with a single *my*; he gives him more honourable titles, and his heart grasps him more closely and affectionately than any of the rest.

The man that was born blind, and cured by Christ, owns him, acts some faith before the pharisees: 'If this man were not of God, he could do nothing,' John 9:33; and he said, 'I believe,' ver. 89, and he worshipped him. But when Christ comes to talk with him particularly, vers. 36-38, he believes. When Christ comes to talk with a great sinner, one that hath had diseases naturally incurable, he exerts a stronger faith than others. It is then, *Lord, I believe*, and it is a faith accompanied with an adoration.

(2.) In following occasions. Pardoning such great sins, and converting such great sinners, is the best credential letter Christ brings with him from heaven. Men naturally would scarce believe for his own sake, but for his work's sake they would, because they are more led by sense than faith. This Christ knew, when he bids his disciples believe him for the work's sake that he was sent by God, and that they are unanimous in this work of grace, as well as in other works: 'Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work's sake,' John 14:11. Therefore those that have been partakers of this converting grace, if they stagger and doubt afterwards, they give the greatest affront to Christ.

For their unbelief is not only against his person, but against its work too. That he has far more reason to say to such than he did to his disciples, 'How long shall I be with you,' &c., Mat. 17:17: what should I stay to do such great works as these, and cannot be believed? Such great sins pardoned and escaped, make men take faster hold of Christ afterward. As a man that hath lately got out of a deep lake, wherein there were many serpents, crocodiles, and venomous creatures, which he has escaped, and has no sanctuary to protect him from their fury but by hanging upon a small bough; when he looks down upon them, and sees them gaping for him, and ready to devour him, if he were within their reach, he would summon up all his strength to hold fast that branch. In such a day will the branch of the Lord also be beautiful and glorious.

Certainly when the soul went out to Christ in so desperate a condition, with the load of guilt and discouragement upon it, and resolved to venture upon him, come what would of it, and found success; as it was the boldest adventure, which the Scripture frequently calls boldness, so it is the greatest encouragement to come to Christ upon any occasion whatsoever hereafter. This first act of faith is of so noble and generous a quality, that it is set as the copy of all following acts of faith. Beginning of your confidence,' Heb. 3:14, [ [ [ [ [ , the primary act of faith, which was the principal act of confidence. Though there was a greater strength in the habit of faith after conversion, yet the first exercise of it upon Christ is the boldest and most vigorous, because it was for the saving the life when the soul saw no recovery any way but in Christ, and the most noble when it was under the discouragements of such mountains of guilt.

It also gave Christ the greatest honour, for it was an act of greater confidence in him than any succeeding act could be. Now if thou didst put forth such a high and daring act of faith when all thy sins hung about thee, and thou hadst neither a Hur nor Aaron to hold up thy hands, with much more confidence mayest thou come now, since thou hast tried how successful thy first faith has been. So when temptations assault thee, and the devil with all his black legions besets thee round, thou art not in a worse condition than at the first, when all thy sins did not only besiege thee, but possess thee. Well may such a soul say, If I acted faith when the devil had all the strongholds in me at the worst, now it is but a start out, and exercise the power of that first faith.

(3.) In case of corruptions likewise and unmastered sins. I have great corruptions, but the power which raised Christ raised me, when I had greater stones upon me wherewith I had even wearied God himself; and now when I have fewer, though they are too great still, shall I despair of that power which wrought greater miracles for me, and threw away my gravestones when I was not able to stir myself?

(4.) So in the case of desertion. I will venture to go to God, let him frown and strike; for I am sure I did once go to him when I was his absolute sworn enemy, and he had not a greater hater of him in the world than I was, and he did receive me. I am not worse now

than I was at that time, for I love him, and would do all that I can to please him; therefore I will press into his presence now, and try the success of my first faith. Such men's faith is usually a more generous faith, because they have less of the principle of reason to support it. It is like that of Abraham's, a believing in hope against hope, Rom. 4:18. A faith, against mighty and mountainous opposition of high and mighty sins, that might scare a man from such acts of faith, and establish a diffidence of the promises of God in the soul. God receives no more glory from the faith of any than from those of the greatest sinners through their repentance.

7. Fear and reverence. Such will never despise the riches of that goodness and patience which has been given out to him, Rom. 2:4, because it has led him to repentance; and he will not provoke that goodness, which is conducting him to the enjoyment of all the fruits of repentance, to throw him off: 'There is forgiveness with thee,' saith David, 'that thou mayest be feared,' or worshipped, Ps. 130:4. If God should set a mark of death upon every iniquity, who could stand in his presence, or have any hope to be heard? but because he is a God of forgiveness, therefore he is revered; therefore the more forgiveness he doth expend upon any, the more he is revered. After a man's return to God, his fear of God is increased upon a more ingenuous account, for he fears God and his goodness, Hosea 3:5, whereas before he feared God and his power, God and his justice. And the Jews, of whom he there speaks, shall fear or reverence that goodness the more, because the sin he has pardoned was so great, as the crucifying the Son of God which, according to their fathers' wish, lay upon the heads of all their posterity.

God's goodness once tasted will make ingenuity afraid to offend him. Self-interest also will make them afraid to provoke that mercy that formally relieved them, to cashier them out of his favour. When the man was in the deep dungeon, where the fetters of sin entered into his very soul, and bound up under the terrors of the law, when mercy stepped in and delivered him, and poured oil into his wounds, he will be afraid to provoke that mercy to leave him in the same condition in which it found him, and from whence it drew him. He will be loath to be numbered amongst the crew of transgressors and bank of galley-slaves from whence he has been redeemed. He that

hath tasted the bitterness of sin will fear to commit it; and he that hath felt the sweetness of mercy will fear to offend it.

I might add, for others' sakes, to engage them to come to Christ. Every conversion of a great sinner is a new copy of God's love; it is a repeated proclamation of the transcendency of his grace: 'Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,' Eph. 2:5, 6. God hath quickened those rank sinners that were as black as darkness itself, and hath raised them to a condition of light. Why? Not only for themselves, but that in the acts to come he might shew forth transcendent riches of his grace, ver. 7. It was a picture God drew of his own heart, and exposed to the view of the world, that they might know, by the gracious reception and high advancement of those sinners, how liberal he is, and would always be, in the distribution of his grace, that penitent sinners of as great stains might be encouraged in all ages to rely upon him. This was his design in Paul's conversion, in this chapter: 'Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,' ver 16; a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him. He sets up this apostle as a white flag to invite rebels to treat with him, and return to their loyalty. As every great judgment upon a grand sinner is as the hanging a man in chains, to deter others from the like practice, so every conversion is not only an act of God's mercy to the convert, but an invitation to the spectators.

This is the argument David useth to persuade God to pour into him the joy of his salvation: 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways,' &c., Ps. 51:12, 13. I will make all Jerusalem ring of it, and sinners, seeing the multitude and long train of thy tender mercies, shall fly into thy arms to be partakers of the same grace. For every great conversion is as a sea-mark to guide others into a safe harbour. And indeed, this he tells God when he had received pardon, that this would be the issue of God's pardon to David, Ps. 52:5, 6, which is thought to be penned upon the same occasion. Ps. 51, when, ver. 5, he had been forgiven, he tells God what the effect upon others would be: 'For this shall every one that is godly,' &c., ver. 6, judging it the fittest time to come when God is dealing out his mercy. Such effects we find when Christ was upon the earth; when

Christ called Matthew, Mark 2:14, the next news we bear, ver. 15, is, that many publicans and sinners sat down with him, and followed him. Many of the same tribe were encouraged by this kindness to one of their fellows to attend upon him.

As when a physician comes into an house where many are sick, and cures one that is desperate, it is an encouragement to the rest to rely upon his skill.

When Christ gives an experiment of his art on any sinner near thee, it is a call from heaven as well to excite thy emulation to come to him, as thy astonishment at it; as the conversion of the Gentiles was to provoke the Jews to jealousy: 'Salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke,' &c., Rom. 11:11. Indeed, such conversions may more rationally move men, than any miracle can objectively move the sense, to see such a remarkable change wrought in the soul of a devil, in a diabolical nature. If men believe not in Christ after the sight of such standing miracles, it is an aggravation of their impenitence, as much as any miracle Christ wrought upon the earth was of the Jews' obstinacy, and does put as black a dye upon it: 'Ye, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him,' Mat. 21:32. Not any great sinner that thou hast seen take heaven by violence, but is writ down by God as a mark against all thy unbelief. And how many hundred marks may Christ bring against thee, upon the account of others converted round about thee. The mark set upon Paul may refer to this, Acts 9:1; because in the foregoing chapter Luke had related the successful progress of the gospel in Samaria and Jerusalem, which was an evidence of the power of this new doctrine; yet Paul proceeded in his persecuting fury, against such clear testimonies.

Had you been in the times of Christ, and seen those miracles he wrought among the Jews, you would all think you should never have been so stupid as they were, but would presently have believed in him upon a sight of those wonders. Let me tell you, the success of Christ's grace upon the souls of men, whereof you have seen many evidences, is a greater miracle, by Christ's own confession, than usually he wrought; for he tells the apostles they should work greater works, John 14:12, which he means of their success in converting work. And so thy impenitency has as great aggravations

as the Jewish perversity. Let every such conversion of a great sinner be a ground of hope to thee, and a spur in thy side.

Further, such conversions evidence that God's commands are practicable, that his yoke is not burdensome. Men naturally think God a hard master, that his commands are impossible to be performed; but when they see men that had lain soaking in sin many years to have a fresh and fair verdure by grace, to run with delight in the ways of God's commands; when they see men that had the greatest prejudices against the ways of God thoroughly turned, they may think with themselves, Why may not I observe those commands? Is it more impossible for me than such a one? It is natural to men not to believe unless they see miracles: 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,' John 4:48. Therefore all the standing miracles God hath left in the world are the extraordinary conversions of men, and the worst of men, that men may thereby be convinced of the power of the gospel and the strength of his grace, by seeing the admirable effects of it upon others; for many times conversion begins in admiration.

The use of this subject is,

1. First, Instruction. The doctrine manifests the power of the gospel. Nothing shews more the heavenly authority of the Christian religion, and the divine efficacy of the word, than the sudden conversions of notorious sinners; that a man should enter into a church a tiger, and return a lamb. It is this little stone which is instrumental to lay lusts, more giant-like than Goliath, grovelling in the dust. That Paul, mad with rage against the Christians, should, after an arrest in his journey, embrace a religion he hated; a pharisee changed into a preacher; a persecutor commence a martyr; that one of eminent parts, in favour with the Sanhedrin, should fly from a preferment expected, and patronise a doctrine contemned in the world, and attended with poverty, misery, cruel scourgings, and death; whenever you see such effects, take them as credentials from heaven, to maintain the credit of the word, and to assert the authority of that conclusion Paul lays down, that it is 'the power of God unto salvation,' Rom. 1:16. God gains a reputation to the gospel and the

power of Christianity, that can in a moment change persons from beasts to men, from serpents to saints.

2. The groundlessness of despair. Despair not of others, when thou dost reflect upon thy own crimes, and considerest that God never dealt with a baser heart in the world than thine was. Was not Paul as unlike to prove a convert as any relation of thine that wallows in his blood? Who would have thought that Onesimus should run from his master and be caught in Christ's arms? Neither despair of thyself. Shall any soul in anguish, and covered with penitential blushes, think itself cast out of the riches of God's affectionate grace? Shall any man so much blaspheme the merciful heart of Jesus Christ, as to fly to a knife, a halter, or a deep well for succour? Though thou wert in hell, David tells thee God is with thee, even there in his essential presence, yea, though thou wert hell itself; for where the devil dwells, that is hell; yet if the soul throbs, sighs, groans under it, his infinite grace will break down the door, and come in upon thee. And we know that neither she that had seven devils, nor he that had a legion, were strong enough to keep out Christ.

Secondly, The comfort of this subject. If God has made thee of a great sinner the object of his mercy, thou mayest be assured of continuance of his love. He pardoned thee when thou wert an enemy, will he leave thee now thou art his friend? He loved thee when thou hadst razed out in a great measure his image and picture which he had set in thy soul, will he hate thee now since he has restored that image, and drawn it with fresh colours? He justified thee when thou wert ungodly, and will he cast thee off since he hath been at such pains about thee, and written in thee a counterpart of his own divine nature in the work of grace? Were his compassions first moved when thou hadst no grace, and will they not sound louder since thou hast grace? Would the father embrace his son when his garments smelled of drag and swine, and will he cast him off after he hath put upon him a royal robe? Will Pharaoh's daughter pity Moses when he was in the ark, and will she scorn him when he is dressed?

2. Supplies of his grace. Thou hadst a rich present of his grace sent thee when thou couldst not pray for it, and will he not much more give thee whatsoever is needful when thou callest upon him?

He was found of thee when thou didst not seek him, and will he hide himself from thee when thou art inquiring after him? A wise builder does not begin a work when he is not able to finish it. God considered, before he began with thee, what charge thou wouldst stand him in, both of merit in Christ and grace in thee; so that the grace he hath given thee is not only a mercy to thee, but an obligation on himself, since his credit is engaged to complete it. Thou hast more unanswerable arguments to plead before him than thou hadst, viz. his Son, his truth, his promise, his grace, his name, wherein thou hadst not the least interest. To what purpose has God called thee, and marked thee, if he doth not intend to supply thee with as much grace as shall bring thee to glory? To what purpose should a creditor forgive part of a debt, and lay the debtor in prison for the other part? Has God given thee Christ, and will he detain anything else? Supplies of wants, grants of anything thou desirest, are but as a few grains of pepper that the grocer puts in as an overplus to many pounds.

3. Strength against corruptions. Can molehills stand against him who has levelled mountains? Can a few clouds withstand the melting force of the sun, which has dissolved those black mists that overspread the face of the heavens? No more can the remainders of thy corruption bear head against his power, which has thrown down the great hills of the sins of thy natural condition, and has dissolved the thick fogs of thy unregeneracy. Thou canst neither doubt his strength nor his love; *amor gaudet in maximis* (love rejoices in the greatest things); he has done the greatest, and will he withdraw his hand from doing the least? When Moses slew the Egyptian, it is said that he ‘supposed his brethren would have understood, that God intended by his hand to deliver them,’ Acts 7:25. Moses was a type of Christ: has Christ overthrown a whole army of Egyptians, that did not only pursue thee, but keep thee in slavery? Has he overturned them all in the Red Sea? And wilt thou not take notice thereby, that he intends to be thy deliverer from the scattered troops of them?

Thirdly, Exhortation. 1. To those that God hath dealt so with.

1. Glorify God for his grace. Admiration is all the glory you can give to God for his grace, seeing you can add nothing to his essential glory. Christ will come at the last day to be admired; I pray send your admirations beforehand to attend him at his coming. Who made

thee thus to differ from another? Was it not God? Let him, then, have the glory. If he made thee to differ from others in the enjoyment of his mercy, do thou also differ from others in the sounding of his praise. If thou hast an angel's state, it is fit thou shouldst have an angel's note. If David, when he considered the glorious heavens God had made for man, cried out so affectionately, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him!' Ps. 8:4; surely when thou considerest that work of grace which God hath wrought in thee, thou mayest with astonishment cry out, Oh, what is man that thou art mindful of him! What is such a vile creature, that thou shouldst take him into thy bosom? For there is not a grace in thee but is more glorious than the sun with all its regiments of stars, and is more like to God than the great fountain of light with all its amazing splendour. It is something of that heaven which is more glorious than all the rest of the heavens, and is above the reach of the natural eye. Oh what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, to make him, who is a hell by sin, to become heaven by grace! Pardon of but one act of sin, makes us for ever debtors to God; because one sin renders us obnoxious to eternal torments, and every sin includes a hatred of God. What, then, is it to remit such vast sums, if to pardon one be a miracle? To pardon many committed against a suffering Christ that hath invited us, and repeats his invitations, after they have been rejected, is a miracle of the greatest magnitude, something above a miracle!

How should you think Jacob's expression in temporal mercies, a few sheep, too mean, 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies,' Gen. 32:10. Oh I am less, less, less than the least of all this mercy. A great sinner, when converted, should sing a note somewhat above David's 'What shall I render?' Ps. 116:12; and should say, I can render nothing, nothing; but I will render praise, blessing, amazement, astonishment; that is all I can render, and I cannot render enough of that. Had you chosen God first, it had been some ingenuity in God to answer that affection; but God chose you first, and that when there was nothing lovely in you, when he saw you the most deformed creatures in the world. There was no likeness between God and thee. *Similis simile amat* (like loves like), is a rule in nature; but in this case, *Deus optimus diligit hominem pessimum* (the highest God esteems the worst of men).

It is that which does amaze the disciples; they could not tell the reason why Christ should manifest himself to them, John 14:22. Perhaps thou art only snatched out of a family; the wrath of God may be fallen upon the rest, and thou only escaped. Has he not lopped down many cedars in morality, and chosen thee, a thorn, a shrub, to deck heaven with? Are not many damned that were not guilty of thy sins?

How wonderful is it that such a black firebrand should be made a statue fit for glory! He might have written thy name as easily in his black book as in his white. Is it not admirable mercy for a God provoked, to take pains with stiff-necked sinners, and to beat down mountains of high imaginations, to rear up a temple to himself? If mercy had knocked once or twice, and no more, thou hadst dropped into hell; but mercy would not leave knocking. Perhaps thy sins were so great, that if thou hadst gone but a little farther, thou hadst been irrecoverable; but God put a stop to the proud waves, saying, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.'

2. Often call to mind thy former sin. It hath been the custom of the saints of God formerly. When Matthew reckons up the twelve apostles, Mat. 10:3, whereof he was one, he remembers his former state, 'Matthew the publican;' but none of the other evangelists call him so in that enumeration.

(1.) It makes us more humble. Thoughts of pride cannot lodge in us, when the remembrance of our rags, bolts, and fetters is frequently renewed. What was there in thy former life, but misery, to move God to shew mercy to thee? Though Paul had a greater manifestation than any we read of, nay, than Christ himself had (for we do not read that Christ was rapt up into the third heavens), yet how frequently does he remember his sin of persecuting, to keep humiliation in exercise, and stop the growth of pride.

(2.) It will make us thankful. Sense of misery heightens our obligation to mercy. Men at sea are most thankful for deliverance when they consider the danger of the foregoing storm. A long night makes a clear morning more welcome.

(3.) It will make thee more active in the exercise of that grace which is contrary to thy former sin. Christ asked Peter thrice whether he loved him, John 21, to put him tacitly in mind of his late

sin, and to have a threefold exercise of his love, proportionable to his threefold denial.

(4.) It will be a preservative against falling into the same sin again. Perhaps Christ might press that threefold demand of Peter's love, to renew his repentance for his apostasy, as the best antidote against the falling into the same sin; and therefore Peter was grieved when he asked him the third time; not so much, it may be, for the suspicion his Master had of his fidelity, as for the just cause of jealousy his fall had given him. And at this third question, calling to mind his denial, he renewed his grief for his late unworthy carriage. Look back, then, upon thy former sin, but let it be with anger and shame, to strengthen thy detestation, to strangle thy former delight in it, and to magnify the mercy of God, who has delivered thee from it. When the Corinthians were proud of their spiritual gifts, the apostle beats down their swelling plumes, by giving them a review of their accursed state 'Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols,' 1 Cor. 12:2. When a convert frequently considers what he was once in his unregenerate state, he would not for all the honours, profits, and pleasures of the world, return to that state again, so great a delight he takes in the work of the new creature.

The second branch of exhortation is to those that are in a doubting condition. The main objection such make is the greatness of sin. Oh, there was never such a great sinner in the world as I am! If you rake all hell over, you will not find such another. Sure God will never pardon me; my sins are too great to be forgiven. Such language as this does sometimes drop from men, which they are partly urged to by the devil, to disparage that royal prince Jesus, that came to destroy his works, and to keep up an enmity between God and man, in making the creature have jealous thoughts of the Creator; and partly from a man's own conscience, which, acting by those legal principles written in the heart by nature, which are directive, and upon non-observance condemning, but discover nothing of pardoning grace. This was the first act of in natural conscience in Adam after he had sinned; he had the least thoughts of forgiveness, for he studied nothing but how he might fly from the presence of God. Such speeches as these discredit thy Creator if they be persisted in; argue thee to be one of Cain's posterity, who indeed

told God to his very face that his 'sin was greater than could be forgiven,' Gen. 4:18. I will a little argue with such.

(1.) But art thou indeed the greatest sinner? I can hardly believe it. Didst thou ever sin after the rate that Paul did? Or wert thou ever possessed with such a fury? Sure there have been some as great sinners as thou art, be thou as bad as bad can be. If thou were to look over the names of all those now in heaven, and ask them all what sins they were guilty of before God shewed mercy to them, I cannot think but thou wouldest find many that would mate thee, yea, and exceed thee too; and thou canst not charge thyself with any black circumstances, but thou wouldest meet with some or other that would cry out presently, Oh, I was in the like condition, and rather worse! What dost thou think of Christ's murderers, who resisted the eloquence of his sermons and the power of his miracles? And when his death had darkened the sun, shook the earth, clave the rocks, rent the veil of the temple in twain, not one heart among that murderous crew had any saving relentings that we read of. And yet were not some of these converted by Peter's sermon, and the pardon of them left upon record by the Spirit of God?

Have not some of God's greatest favourites been the greatest sinners? Did not Adam draw upon him the guilt of all his posterity, and may in some sense be charged with the sins of all those that came out of his loins, even all mankind? Yet to this very person was the first promise of the gospel made, and that before he pronounced any sentence against him for his sin, Gen. 3:15.

(2.) Suppose thou art the greatest, is thy staying from Christ the way to make all thy sins less? Art thou so rich as to pay this great debt out of thy own revenue? Or hast thou any hopes of another surety? Did any man or angel tell thee they could satisfy for thee? Can complaints of a great load, without endeavouring its removal, ease that back that bears it?

(3.) Are thy sins the greatest? Is not the staying from Christ a making them greater? Does not God command thee to come to Christ? And is not thy delay a greater act of disobedience than the complaint of thy sinfulness can be of humility? Hast thou not load enough already? but wilt thou add unbelief, which is as black as all thy other sins put together? Is not a refusal of his mercy

provocative? Thou art mad if thou thinkest thy sin can decrease by trampling upon Christ's heart, and spurning at his compassion. Thou hast sinned against justice, against wisdom, against common providence. Is not this enough, but wilt thou rob him of an opportunity to shew the riches of his grace, by refusing the blood of his Son, which his wisdom contrived and his love offers? Who is it persuades thee thus to keep off from Christ? Does God? Shew me where is his hand for it? Shew me thy authority in God's warrant. But since thou canst not, I am sure it is thy own corrupt heart and the devil in league together. And mayest thou not say of him far better than Ahab did of Micaiah, 'Thou didst never prophesy good to me'? No, he never did, nor ever will. What, wilt thou more black thyself by following the devil's counsel than obeying God's command? If thy sin be great, let it multiply thy tears, but by no means stop thy progress to Christ.

(4.) Were thy sins less than they are, thou mightest not so easily believe in Christ, as now thou mayest. If thou wilt not believe while thy sins are great, and thy heart naughty, I dare assure thee, if thy heart were not naughty, and thy sins little, thou wouldst not believe; for thou wouldst be apt to believe in thy own heart, and trust in thy own righteousness, rather than believe in Christ. Great sins and a bad heart felt and bewailed, is rather an advantage; as hunger is an incentive to a man to seek for meat. If men had clean hearts, it is like they would dispose of them otherwise, and rather think Christ should come to them. Men's poverty should rather make them more importunate than more modest. To say, I will not come to Christ, because I have great sins, is as if one should say, I will never have anything to do with happiness if offered, because I have great misery; I will go to no chirurgeon, because my wound is so great; I will eat no bread, because I am so exceeding hungry and like to starve. This is ill logic; and so it is with thee to argue, Because I am unclean, therefore I will not go to the fountain to be washed; or to think to be sanctified before believing. Now since thou hast, as thou confessest, no righteousness to trust in, methinks thou shouldst be the more easily persuaded to cast thyself upon Christ, since there is no other way but that.

If, therefore, thou art afraid of drowning under these mighty floods which roll upon thee, methinks thou shouldst do as men ready

to perish in the waters, catch hold of that which is next them, though it be the dearest friend they have; and there is none nearer to thee than Christ, nor any such a friend; catch hold therefore of him.

(5.) The greatness of thy sin is a ground for a plea. Turn thy sins into arguments, as David doth, 'for it is great,' Ps. 25:11; some translate it, 'though it be great;' and the Hebrew word will bear both. The psalmist useth two arguments, God's name, and the greatness of his sin. And both are as good arguments as they were then. Thou mayest go to God with this language in thy mouth; Lord, my impurity is great, there is more need therefore of thy washing me; my wound is deep, the greater is the necessity of some plaster for a cure. What charitable man in the world would not hasten a medicine, rather than refuse to grant it! What earthly physician would object, The disease is great, therefore there is no necessity of a cure; therefore there is no room left for my skill! And shall God be less charitable than man? Dogs may lay claim to crumbs that fall from the master's table. Thou mayest use also the argument of God's name. Sinners may plead for grace upon the account of God's glory, viz., the glory God will have by it. His wisdom is eminent in serving his own ends by his greatest enemy. His power in conquering sin, his grace in pardoning. Show him his own name, Exod. 34, and see if he will deny any letter of it.

If thy disease were not so great, Christ's glory would not be so illustrious. Pardon of such sins enhanceth the mercy and skill of thy Saviour. The multitude of devils which were in Mary Magdalene, are recorded to shew the power of that Saviour that expelled them, and wrought so remarkable a change. Are thy sins the greatest? God that loves to advance his free grace in the highest manner, will be glad of the opportunity to have so great a sinner follow the chariot of it, and to manifest thereby its uncontrollable power. Use David's argument, Ps. 37:12, when, ver. 8, he prayed that God would deliver him from his transgressions; ver. 12, he useth this argument, that he was a stranger. I know no reason but it may be thine, for if thy sins be great, thou art more alienated from God than the ordinary rank of men. Lord, thou dost command us to shew kindness to strangers, to love our enemies; and wilt thou not use the same mercy to a stranger that thou commandest others to use, and shew the same love to so

great an enemy as I am? The greater my enmity, the more glorious will be thy love.

(1.) Plead therefore the infiniteness of God's mercy. It is strange if thy debts should be so great, that the exchequer of the King of kings cannot discharge them. Why should the apostle say God was 'rich in merey,' Eph. 4, and call it 'great love,' if it were spent only upon little sins, and if any debts could exhaust it; for surely an infinite God cannot be finitely rich. If God be rich in mercy, he is surely infinitely rich; thou canst not think that any that have got to heaven before thee have drained his treasures, for then it had been finite, not infinite. They were not unsearchable riches, if the sins of all the world could find the bottom of them.

God looks upon his grace as the greatest part of his estate. He calls it his riches, which title he gives not any other attribute. Now riches are not to lie by and rust, but to be laid out and traded with; and the more they are traded with, the more wealth they bring in. God hath not delight to keep these riches by him, and to hoard them up for no use; for *omne bonum est sui diffusivum* (good diffuses itself through all things); therefore the more goodness anything hath, the more diffusive it is of itself. God loves to distribute his wealth upon his own terms, and to venture out riches of grace, that he may have returns of riches of glory; so that if you come to God, you have all his estate at your service. Till thou canst be as sinful as God is merciful, as evil as God is good, do not think thy iniquities can check an almighty goodness. Mercy bears the greatest sway in God's name, Exod. 34:6, 7. There is but one letter of his power, two of his justice, and nine or ten expressions of his mercy. His power attends his mercy as well as his justice, so that on mercy's side against justice there is five to one, which is great odds.

Plead then with God, Lord, it is said in thy word, 'Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give thee, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it,' Prov. 3:28. Should a man not refuse to give to his neighbour when he has it by him? And shall the merciful God deny me that mercy which I beg of him upon my knees, when he has it all in store by him? Must I forgive my brother, if he offends seventy-seven times, a double perfect number? And must I be more charitable to man than infinite mercy will be to me? Shall thy justice only speak, and thy mercy be silent, and plead

nothing on my behalf? Hast thou not said that thou art he ‘that blots out transgressions for thy own sake?’ Isa. 43:25; that thou dost ‘blot out iniquities like a thick cloud?’ Isa. 44:22. Is there any cloud so thick as to master the melting power of the sun; and shall ever a cloud of sin be so thick as to master the power of thy mercy? Has not thy mercy as much strength and eloquence to plead for me, as thy justice has to declaim against me? Is thy justice better armed with reason than thy kindness with compassions? Have thy compassions no eloquence? Oh, who can resist their pleasing rhetoric!

(2.) Christ’s, and God’s intent in his coming, was to discharge great sins. He was called Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins. And do you think some of his people’s sins were not as great as any men’s sins in the world? To save only from little iniquities, had not been a work suitable to the glorious name of Jesus. Neither can we conceive how Christ should enter into such strict bonds to his Father to be a surety only for some smaller debts. If this had not been his intent, he would have put some limitation in that prayer he taught his disciples, and not have commanded them to pray, ‘Forgive us our trespasses,’ but forgive us our little sins, or sins of such a size. He never asked what sins, and how many sins, men were guilty of when they came to him; but upon faith, saith he, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee.’ Plead therefore with Christ, and say, Thou didst come to do thy Father’s will, which was, that none should be cast off that come unto thee; and thou hast said the same; it is not sufficient for thee to say it merely, and not to do it. Wilt thou draw me with the cords of a man (for I could not thus come to thee unless thou didst draw me), and shall I be beaten back with a frown?

(3.) Christ’s death was a satisfaction for the greatest sins, both *ex parte facientis*, Christ, and *ex parte acceptantis*, God; for God could not accept any satisfaction but what was infinite. ‘One sacrifice for sins for ever,’ &c., Heb. 10:12; not *one sin*, but sins; not *little sins*, but sins without exception. Yea, and it is all sin, 1 John 1:7; and all includes great as well as little. Satan once came to a sick man, and shews him a great catalogue of his sins, concluding from thence his eternal damnation. The sick man, strengthening himself by the word of God, bid the devil write over the catalogue in great

letters those words, 1 John 1:7, whereupon the devil presently leaves. Are thy sins be greater than Christ's merit? Or thine offences than his sacrifice? It is strange if the malignity of thy sin should be as infinite as the virtue of his death. He hath satisfied for all the saints that ever came to heaven; and put thy sins in the balance with theirs, and surely they cannot weigh so much. He was 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;' and are thy sins as great as the sins of the whole world? If part of his merits be enough to save ten thousand damned souls in hell, if they had applied it, is it not enough to satisfy God for thy sins, which are far less? Was not Christ charged with as great sins as thine can be when he was upon the cross? Or are thy single sins bigger or than all those the prophet means when he saith, 'And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all?' Isa. 53:6.

Well, then, plead thy Saviour's death, since it was for his honour to satisfy for sins of so deep a dye. It is said in thy word, it is a joy to a righteous man to perform judgment, and shall it not be much more a joy to the righteous God? Behold, here I offer thee the atonement thy Son and my Saviour has made, and if it be not enough, I am content to perish; but if it be, I desire thee to do me justice with that joy that a righteous man would do it with, and discharge my transgressions. And if thou dost object, that I have flung away this satisfaction, and would not have it, I answer, my Saviour's satisfaction was for such sins as those, otherwise none would be saved; for was there any but refused the proffer of it at first, made demurs before they entertained it? Let thy objections be what they will, Christ shall be my advocate to answer for me.

(4.) Christ is able to take away great sins. Did he ever let any one that came to him with a great infirmity, go back without a cure, and dishonour himself so much, as that it should be said, it was a distemper too great for the power of Jesus to remedy? And why should there be any sin that he cannot pardon? It is as easy for him to heal the one as the other; for he did with as much ease and delight say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee;' as say, 'Take up thy bed, and walk.' Hast thou seven devils? Suppose a legion, *i.e.* six thousand six hundred and sixty-six; he did dispossess a body of as many: can he not as easily dispossess a soul? If thou hadst ten thousand legions, I dare say Christ would not lose an opportunity of such a

conquest; for it would please him more to do great works than little, and to shew how far his power could reach.

Were it not for such objects, we could not know whether he could 'save to the utmost,' or no, Heb. 7:25. What has he this ability for? To lie idle? No, surely to be exercised about the most difficult tasks. Suppose the scroll of thy sins were as long as to reach from earth to the highest heavens, would this reach to the utmost of Christ's ability? If thou hadst sinned as far as any man in the world can sin, yet still thou art not got without the verge of Christ's saying power. That word utmost I dare set against all thy objections. If you had the sins of all the damned in hell upon you, you could not put either his free grace or vast power to a nonplus. His blood is of that virtue, that were it poured out upon a devil, it would make him presently commence a glorious angel. What is either a great or a light disease to omnipotence, when with the same word he can cure the greatest as well as the least distempers?

But may the soul say, I do not question his power, but his will. Therefore,

(5.) Christ's nature leads him to shew mercy to the greatest sinners. Some question whether Christ will pardon them, for they look upon him as a hard master, that will not easily forgive. But Christ gives another character of himself, Mat. 11:28, 29, when he exhorts men to come to him; he tells them they must not judge him to be of a ragged and implacable nature, but as meek as they are sinful. Meekness is seen in pardoning of injuries, not keeping them in memory, to beget and cherish revenge. Now, the greater the provocation, the more transcendent is that meekness to pass it by. Did he ever upbraid any with their offences, and hit them in the teeth with their former extravagances? Luke 7:44. Christ makes a narrative of Mary's acts of kindness to him, but not a syllable of her foul transgressions. Are thy sins so great? Surely Christ, who delights in his compassions, will not lose such an opportunity of evidencing both his power and his pity upon such a subject; for if there cannot be so great a sinner as thou art, he is never like to have such a season for it, if he miss of thee.

(6.) Christ was exalted by God upon this very account: 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto

God by him,' Heb. 7:25. How comes Christ to be so able to save to the uttermost? It is 'because he ever lives to make intercession for them.' For whom? For those that come to God by him. What has Christ his life in heaven for, but to intercede? And would his Father's love to him, and the greatness of his interest in God be discovered by granting some small requests, the pardon of a few and little sins? Christ is consecrated priest by the oath of God, Heb. 7:28; would God put himself to his oath for a light business, a thing of little moment? 'What is the end of this oath? Compare it with: 'For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath,' Heb. 6:16-18; and all is that you 'might have a strong consolation.' What strong comfort could there be, if only little debts were remitted? What is the end of an oath? Ver. 16, to take away strife. Men do not strive with God, or doubt of his mercy to forgive little sins, for they think that will be done of course. But the great contest men have with God is about his willingness to remit great debts, scarlet sins: upon this account the strife is between God and doubting sinners; therefore, to bring this contest to a period, God hath put himself to his oath, and sworn that Christ should be a priest for ever, to take away all strife between him and believing sinners. For whom is this strong consolation founded upon God's oath? For those that 'fly for refuge,' ver. 18. Now the cities of refuge were not appointed for ordinary crimes, but for blood, to secure the malefactor from the avenger.

Shall I add further, God is best pleased with Christ when he makes intercession for the greatest transgressors. Suppose thou hadst been one of Christ's murderers, and hadst given thy vote against him; perhaps thou wouldst have thought this a more crimson sin than any thou art guilty of. You know Christ prayed for their pardon while he was upon the cross; and, God gives this as one reason why he would exalt him: 'He shall divide him, &c., Isa. 53:12. Why? 'Because he poured out his soul to death.' What should he bear sin for, if God had no mind to pardon it? And because 'he was numbered among the transgressors,' which the evangelist understands of his being crucified with thieves, Mark 15:28. And therefore his making intercession for transgressors, must be understood of his prayer upon the cross. And if God did exalt him



feared,' not despised. God never intended mercy as a sanctuary to protect sin.

(1.) It is disingenuous to do so. Great love requires great duties, not great sins. Freeness of grace should make us increase holiness in a more cheerful manner. What high ingratitude is it to be inclined to sin because God is inclined to pardon, to have a frozen heart to him because he hath a melting heart to thee! What, to rebel against him because he hath a compassionate heart, and to be wicked because God is good! to turn grace itself into wantonness! Is this to fear his goodness? No, it is to trample on it; to make that which should excite thee to holiness a bawd to thy lust, and God himself a pander to the devil. If thou dost thus slight the design of this mercy, which thou canst never prize at too high a rate, it is certain thou never hadst the least taste of it. If thou hadst, thou couldst not sin so freely; for when grace enters, it makes the soul dead to sin, Rom. 6:1, 2. The apostle answers such a consequence with a *God forbid!*

(2.) It is foolish so to do. Would any man be so simple as to set his house on fire because he has a great river running by his door, from whence he may have water to quench it; or wound himself, because there is an excellent plaster which has cured several?

(3.) It is dangerous to do so. If thou lovest the present time, thou art in danger to lose eternity. There are many in hell never sinned at such a presumptuous rate. He is merciful to the penitent, but he will not be unfaithful to his threatenings. If thou art willing to receive grace, thou mayest have it, but upon God's conditions. He will not pin it upon thy sleeve whether thou wilt or no. This is to make that which is the savour of life to become the savour of death unto thee. See what an answer Paul gives to such an imagination, Let us do evil, that good may come; whose damnation is just,' Rom. 3:8. He takes a handful of hell-fire and flings it in their faces. Let but Deut. 29:18, 19, stare thee in the face, and promise thyself peace in this course if thou canst 'Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood and it cometh to pass, when he beareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.' As his goodness is great, which thou dost despise; so the wrath will be the hotter thou dost treasure up. Though great sins are occasions of great grace, yet sin doth not necessitate grace. Who can tell

whether ever God would have shewn mercy to Paul, had he done that against knowledge which he did ignorantly? Repentance must first be; see the order, 'Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,' Acts 3:19. First, repentance and conversion, then justification. This grace is only given to penitent sinners. You know not whether you shall repent, but you may know, that if you do not repent you shall be damned. As there is infinite grace to pardon you, if you repent; so there is infinite justice to punish you, if you do not repent. The gospel binds us to our good behaviour as much as the law.

Well, then, to conclude this exhortation. Embolden thyself to draw near to Christ. It is the apostle's use he makes of all his foregoing doctrine, Heb. 10:19, &c. God requires not a heart without sin, but a heart without guile. Who needs more boldness than great sinners? And the apostle sets no limits to it. Let us, who have been as great sinners as any, resolve to do as they in Jeremiah did, Jer. 3:22. They had both a command and a promise. 'Return,' there is the command. 'I will heal,' &c., there is the promise. Presently they reply, 'We will come to thee,' &c. They seem to snatch the promise out of God's mouth. How will these quick and ready converts rise up in judgment against thy slowness and dulness! Shall they do this upon one promise; and when thou hast all the promises in the book of God repeated to thee, shall God hear no other answer but this, We will not return, or We dare not come, We dare not believe thee? Did God give but one promise to Adam, and did he embrace it, and live upon it all his life (for we read of no more he had than that of the seed of the woman breaking the serpent's head); and wilt thou not return, when thou hast so many promises, filling every page in the Scripture?

Hast thou not a world of precedents? Did not God take up all his saints from the dunghill with all their rags, and clothe them? Were any of them born princes and sons of heaven? Alas, every man at first sued for a Saviour in the right of a sinner; and all pleaded in the court of heaven *in forma pauperis* (as a bankrupt). Were they not debtors, and could they do that which might make God cross out one of those sums they owed him? Oh, think not then thou canst dam up that torrent of love that has flowed so freely to the world for so many ages. Though thy disease be grievous, Yet it is not

irrecoverable, provided thou goest to the physician. He can with a breath burn up thy corruption, as soon as dissolve the creation. Christ can turn the muddiest water into such wine that can please the heart both of God and man. As you have been vessels of sin, if you will be vessels of repentance God will make you brimful of mercy. Plead not, therefore, thy own unworthiness. Man's unworthiness never yet hindered the flowing of God's kindness. It is too weak a bank to stop the current of God's favour. The greater thy unworthiness, the greater advantage has free grace to manifest its uncontrollable excellency. That man dishonours God that sets his sin above God's goodness, or his unworthiness above God's condescension. You cannot do God a greater pleasure than to come to him to be made clean. When he reckons up thy sin, it is not with an upbraiding, but a compassionate sigh, Jer. 13:27. He longs for the time of thy returning, and minds thee of thy sin, that thou mayest the sooner seek a remedy, and wonders thou wilt continue in such a filthy condition so long.

