**18.**] **Therefore he hath mercy on whom  
he will** (ref. to ver. 15, where see note),  
**and whom he will he hardeneth.**—  
The frequent recurrence of the expression  
“*to harden the heart*” in the history of  
Pharaoh should have kept Commentators  
from attempting to give to **harden** here  
the sense of *treating hardly*, against  
which the next verse would be decisive,  
if there were no other reason for rejecting  
it. Whatever difficulty there lies in this  
assertion, that God *hardeneth* whom He  
will, lies also *in the daily course of His  
Providence*, in which we see this hardening  
process going on in the case of the prosperous ungodly man. The fact is patent,  
whether declared by revelation or read in  
history: but to the solution of it, and its  
reconciliation with the equally certain fact  
of human responsibility, we shall never  
attain in this imperfect state, however we  
may strive to do so by subtle refinements  
and distinctions. The following is the admirable advice of Augustine, from whom  
in this case it comes with double weight,  
seeing that he was a strenuous upholder  
of God’s sovereign grace: “Let it be  
enough for the Christian, living as yet by  
faith, and not yet seeing what is perfect,  
but knowing it only in part, to know, or  
to believe, that God acquits none except  
of His free mercy, through our Lord  
Jesus Christ, aud condemns none, except  
of most equitable justice, through the same  
our Lord Jesus Christ. But why He  
acquits or does not acquit one rather than  
another, let him who can, search into the  
so great deep of His judgments: but—let  
him beware of the precipitous descent.”

**19.**] **Thou wilt say then unto me** (there  
seems no reason to suppose the objector a  
Jew :—the objection is a *general one*, applying to all mankind, and likely to arise  
in the mind of any reader. The expression  
“*O man*” seems to confirm this), **Why then** (then is omitted in our received text,  
but is found in our principal authorities)  
**doth he yet find fault** (yet, as ch. iii. 7:  
assuming your premises,—‘*if this be so*:  
at the same time it expresses a certain  
irritation on the part of the objector)?  
**For who resisteth** (not, ‘*hath resisted*,’  
which is a mistake on the part of the A. V.)  
**his will** (i.e. if it be His will to harden the  
sinner, and the sinner goes on in his sin,  
he does not resist, but goes with the will of  
God)? **Yea rather** (or, **Nay but**: these words  
take the ground from under the previous  
assertion and supersede it by another: implying that it has a certain shew of truth,  
but that the proper view of the matter is  
yet to be stated. They thus convey, as in  
Luke xi. 28, an intimation of rebuke; here,  
with severity : ‘that which thou hast said,  
may be correct human reasoning—but as  
against God's sovereignty, thy reasoning is  
out of place and irrelevant’), **O man** (perhaps without emphasis implying the contrast between man and God, —for this is  
done by the emphatic **thou** following, and  
we have the same address, “O man,” unemphatic in ch. ii. 1), **who art** THOU **that  
repliest against God**?—(implying, ‘thou  
hast neither right nor power to call God to  
account in this manner,’—Notice, that the  
answer to the objector’s question does not lie  
in these verses 19—21, but in the following  
(see there);—the present verses are a rebuke administered to the *spirit* of the objection, which forgets the immeasurable  
distance between us and God, and the relation of Creator and Disposer in which  
He stands to us. As Chrysostom and Calvin well remark, “he first by this rebuke  
humiliates the objector, and prepares his  
mind to receive the answer to his impious  
cavil ”)—**Shall the thing formed** (properly  
of a production of *plastic* art moulded of  
clay or wax) **say to him that formed it,  
“Why didst thou make me thus?”—**