

## A DISCOURSE OF CONVICTION OF SIN.

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*And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believed not on me.—*  
JOHN XVI. 8, 9.

OUR Saviour in this chapter shews what was the intention of his discourse in the former, which was, first, to forewarn his disciples of, and forearm them against, the violence they should meet with in the world after his departure from them, in the chapter foregoing, ver. 20; which violence should be the hotter against them, because it would be thought an acceptable service unto God to assault them with the sharpest persecutions. He therefore wisheth them to remember what he had said, in the fourth verse of this chapter: 'But these things I have told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.' He knew the jealousies of men's hearts, how apt upon every occasion they are to make unjust reflections. Therefore, saith he, consider it well, and do not have hard thoughts of me, when you come to feel these sufferings I now speak of. I tell you before of them, that you may have no cause to blame me, as one that dealt falsely with you in concealing the sting, while I present you with the honey. No; I acquaint you with the worst as well as the best part, the bitterest as well as the sweetest. Then, secondly, he supports his drooping disciples, who began to faint at the thoughts of his departure, John xv. 26; and also in this chapter, which he doth by the promise of a Comforter to be sent unto them.

You may observe, first, that God doth not send any affliction upon his people, without providing them also a cordial; as a wise physician, who prescribes a purge to carry away the corrupt humours, and a cordial to support the spirits. Our Saviour tells them of the Comforter that should refresh them, as well as acquaints them with that misery that might deject them. The same was God's procedure with our first parents after the fall: first, he revives them with a gracious promise, before he denounceth a grievous standing sentence upon them. And,

Secondly, Observe that God sends afflictions on his dearest children. These apostles that were the salt of the Jewish nation, preserving them from a total putrefaction, those that Christ had laid in his bosom, revealed the secrets of his Father, and the mysteries of redemption to, and prayed for their preservation, and intended to do it further in a solemn manner (as he

did in the following chapter), had culled them out as witnesses to bear up his name in the world, and given them an assurance of being in glory with him; yet these must be hated, and killed, and depressed under the violence of the wicked world.

The miseries they should endure are two, John xvi. 2:

First, Excommunication: 'They shall put you out of the synagogues.' The Jews should not think them worthy to be in the church.

Secondly, Destruction: 'Whosoever killeth you will think he doth God service. They should not be thought worthy to live in the world.

And the grounds of this violent proceeding are two:

(1.) Superstitious zeal. They shall think they do God good service in so doing.

(2.) Blind ignorance: ver. 3, 'These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father.' These are the two great grounds of all persecutions that are in the world, superstitious zeal and blind ignorance. You may observe,

First, How often is religion pretended to justify cruelty! God had not any church in the world but among the Jews at that time, yet the body of them do set themselves in opposition against those few disciples that bore up the name of Christ in the world, and under the pretence of religion they would send them out of the world. So contrary to the main design of God, which is to promote charity to man, as well as love to himself.

Secondly, Nothing is so great an enemy to true Christianity as ignorant zeal; nothing so hurtful as passion, clothed with the purple of a seeming piety. A zealous Paul will be a persecuting Paul, because zealous in the external part of the Jewish religion. The superstitious Jews did more oppose the progress of the gospel than either the profane sort among them, or the blind heathen.

Thirdly, We may observe in the chapter how Christ giveth them the reason why he acquainted them with these things now, and withal, why he did not tell them of them before: ver. 4, 'These things I have told you, that, when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.' He was with them, and by his personal presence did give them a remedy upon any emergency. He was a screen to keep off the rage of men from them, by receiving it upon himself.

Fourthly, He searcheth into the causes of their sorrow: ver. 5, 6, 'But now I go my way to him that sent me, sorrow hath filled your hearts.'

(1.) His departure from them, ver. 6, that had filled their hearts with sorrow, the thoughts of that. And who could blame them for grieving at the parting with so good and tender a master, and to part with him when a deluge of misery by his own prediction was flowing in upon them, and to part with him upon such terms, and by such a death as to outward appearance would reflect on them as his followers, as well as on him their master? Such apprehensions of the storm could not but stagger an ungrown faith, and nip their budding hopes and joy. Probably their carnal conceptions of a carnal kingdom being foiled by our Saviour, was the ground of all. Alas! have we left all to follow him, and expected great outward advantages, and that we should be near him, and be his friends; and are we thus mistaken in his person and design, and fallen from the top of our hopes into the depth of an unexpected misery? Such conceptions they might have, and therefore their sorrows were the greater.

First, Observe, that spiritual apprehensions are an antidote against unbelief, and the sorrow consequent upon it. All such sorrow in a Christian

ariseth from ignorant, and false, and mean, and sordid, and unworthy notions of the design and the truths of God. Had these weak and heavy apostles had right and spiritual conceptions of their Master's work, they had rejoiced as much as now they grieved. None can live to Christ, as dying and rising for them, who have no other knowledge of him but 'after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 15, 16. Carnal conceptions of the deeps of God do leave a very gloomy darkness upon the soul. Therefore he searcheth into the causes of their sorrow, the first of which was his departure.

Secondly, Their carelessness in inquiring whither he went; which he tells them of in a way of reproof: ver. 5, 'Now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you ask me, Whither goest thou?' Had they inquired of him the reason of things, their grief had been prevented, and their joy established. It was to heaven he was to go, upon their account as well as his own, to a Father that loved him, and them also.

1. Observe. Those things which are ground of joy in themselves are, by our neglect of a due inquiry, and our mistakes, matter of grief to us. How apt are good men to draw matter of sorrow from grounds of joy! The best man is a very ignorant interpreter of the designs of providence. We cannot see the beauty of providence, because of the black mask that veils it. For want of inquiring of Christ the end of his death and ascension, the reason of his going, and the place whither he went, they tasted not that comfort which this might have afforded them, and missed at present the design and intention of it.

2. We may observe, that the way to true comfort is to inquire into, and consider well, the reason of divine mysteries. Had they understood the reason of his death, the reason of his ascension, the reason of his going to his Father, they could not have grieved, but rather have rejoiced. A slight knowledge will make but a slight grace, and flashy staggering joy: 2 Peter iii. 18, 'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Know how he is a Lord, and how he is a Saviour, and upon what accounts and grounds; and growing in such a kind of knowledge is the way to grow in grace.

Fifthly, He informs them of the necessity of his departure for their advantage. It was necessary for him to take possession of his kingdom, sit down upon his throne; necessary for them, that thereby they might enjoy the choicest fruits of his purchase: ver 7, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.'

1. He illustrates this necessity by the contrary, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;' therefore, if you would have the Comforter come, it is necessary that I go.

2. He confirms it by an asseveration, 'I tell you the truth,' I speak truly to you, 'If I do not go, the Comforter will not come.' There is one to come after my departure to supply my absence, who shall carry on the work of redemption I have laid, with greater success to the conviction of the world, who shall be in your ministry with you, and shall convince men of their sins, and of that remedy I have provided.

We may observe,

First, How tender is our Saviour of grieving his weak and distressed people! He doth not rate them for their unbelieving sorrow, and forbear any further dealing with them; he might have chid them for not believing him upon his bare word, but he condescends to give them an affirmation, next to an oath, 'I tell you the truth.' He is always very careful not to break a bruised reed; and is like his Father, who by his oath hath given us strong consolation, and a mighty prop for our tottering faith.

Secondly, observe this, the death and ascension of Christ were highly necessary for the descent of the Spirit.

(1.) This choicest benefit we receive from God could not have come, unless the justice of God had been satisfied, and his favour procured by a sufficient sacrifice. How unreasonable is it to think God should bestow the highest of his favours, while his justice was not contented ! Christ by his death appeased the anger of his Father, and bare the punishment we had merited, and opened those treasures of grace which by reason of our sins had been shut up from us. Besides, the death of Christ was so perfect an obedience, that it gained all the love and affection of his Father as a requital ; it was so highly grateful to him, and the pleasure he took in it was so great, that because of that he would give to Christ and his people whatsoever was most dear and precious to him. To have this right of sending the Spirit, it was necessary Christ should die. The rock was to be struck by the rod of Moses before it did send out water ; and Christ, the spiritual rock, was to be struck by the curse of the law before the Spirit (which is often in Scripture compared to water) could flow out. And though the Spirit was sparingly communicated before the death of Christ, yet it was communicated, and that upon the promise which Christ made of dying for men in the fulness of time, upon the account of that death which was to be suffered in due time.

(2.) The Spirit could not come unless Christ had ascended ; for by his going to the Father, he means his death and ascension. The Spirit could not come but by the gift and mission of the mediator, on whose head he was first to be poured, and flow down from him on all believers. Besides, Christ received not those rich gifts from the hand of his Father, to communicate to us, till he had entered into the true sanctuary not made with hands. He received them for himself before, to fit him for that obedience he was to perform by the death of the cross ; but he received them to communicate unto us after his ascension, then he received gifts for men. What he purchased by his death, he took possession of at his entrance into heaven. The end of the Spirit's coming could not be carried on without Christ's death and ascension ; for the Spirit was to manifest the infiniteness of God's love to man, and declare the means of salvation. Now, the principal reason upon which this manifestation was to be built, was the death of Christ ; he must therefore die, and rise again, and ascend, before the grounds of this reason could be valid ; which appears afterwards in the reasons rendered of his 'reproving the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.' His death was necessary to satisfy God's justice ; his resurrection and ascension to manifest God's acceptance and approbation of his death. The sending the Spirit being a part of his royalty as mediator, it was not convenient he should be sent till Christ was crowned, and sat down on his throne in his kingdom. There are two benefits by Christ : acquisition of redemption, which was by his death ; and application of that redemption, which is by his intercession in heaven, and his Spirit on earth. So that if he had not ascended, we had wanted the Spirit to make application, and to render us fit for it ; we had wanted the preparation for it, and the comfort of it. Then,

Thirdly, we may observe, that the presence of the Spirit is a greater comfort than simply the presence of Christ in his flesh. 'It is expedient for you that I go away ; if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.' It is better for you I should go, because then the Comforter will come. Christ is a comforter ; but the Spirit is more intimately a comforter than Christ in his fleshly presence. Christ in his first coming did possess himself of our flesh, and converse with his disciples outwardly ; but the Spirit is to possess himself of our hearts inwardly : Gal. iv. 4-6, 'When the fulness of time

was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Christ dwelt among us in the flesh; the Spirit doth not only dwell *with* a believer, but *in* him, John xiv. 17; not only dwell with you by outward declaration, but he shall be in you by inward motion and inspiration. And you see he giveth him here the title of Comforter. The name signifies one that speaks eloquently, persuasively, with much facility, elegance, and affection, in such a manner as mightily works upon others, and pleasingly gratifies them. It signifies both a comforter and instructor, both which agree well to the Holy Ghost. For,

First, He was to acquaint the world with the highest mysteries of God manifest in the flesh; to open the secret of God's love to the world, and the resolves of eternity; to draw the curtain from before those truths which neither the eye of nature, nor the more open eye of the Jews were able to pierce into because of the veil, ver. 13. He was to 'guide them into all truth,' the knowledge and observance of all truth necessary.

Secondly, He was to witness of Christ; and therefore might well be called an instructor. As Christ unfolded the treasures of his Father's love, and purchased divine blessings by his passion, so the Spirit was to bear witness to the commission Christ had to offer up himself, and the validity of that offering, and the nature of his purchase. It was a thing incredible in itself, that a God of infinite tenderness should expose his innocent Son to sufferings and death for rebellious creatures. It was necessary the Spirit should be employed to persuade men inwardly of the reality and truth of this, of the authority of Christ, his sincerity in dying, and the efficacy of that death, and the necessity of their interest in it by faith, and to apply all to the believing soul with comfort, and fill it with peace by virtue of this expiation.

Now what is this Comforter, advocate, or instructor to do? He will reprove, or rather convince, ἐλέγξει; the word here translated *reprove* is sometimes so rendered: 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 'He is convinced of all.' It is the same word which is here, and also in Jude 15, 'To convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds.' It signifies to reprove by way of argument, to manifest by an undeniable demonstration the truth or falsity of such an opinion, so as to stop the mouth of the guilty or erroneous person, that he cannot find so much as a fig-leaf of an excuse, or a starting-hole from it. It is to charge a thing so home and so close as to bring the conscience under the power of truth, and to make it self-condemned, to convict us by our own conscience; so the word is rendered in John viii. 9. So the Spirit was evidently to demonstrate the guilt of sin, and the beauty of righteousness, and the certainty of judgment.

To convince the world. The Spirit was not only given to the apostles, to set up light in their hearts, but to the world in a large sense, to justify Christ before them. Not only to those that shall be seriously affected under a sense of sin, and turn to Christ, but to convince others in the world of sin, who will never step any farther, nor yield to the power and authority of it, nor acknowledge the truth, nor accept of Christ and his righteousness.

What is the Spirit to convince of? Of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. A threefold object the Spirit was to be conversant about.

I. He was to convince of sin. The light of nature was not so extinct but some sins were to be discerned. All the most barbarous nations, agreeing in some common notion of justice and righteousness, they knew that many things they did were worthy of death by divine judgment; and they perceived

by sharp punishments inflicted on some notorious offenders in a particular manner, how odious some actions were to God, and how criminal before him. But,

*First*, The world understood not the extent of sin. They knew some sins, but not all the kinds of sin to which wrath is due; they looked upon some sins as part of their happiness, rather than their misery. What were clearly against the light of nature, crimson and scarlet sins, they could discern, and acknowledge themselves for them worthy of death; but there were some molehill sins, peccadilloes, against which they had no help, by consideration of the mercy of God, by laying hold of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of faith in him. They armed themselves with the mercy of God, without considering the righteousness of Christ. It opens not the malignity of sin, nor understands all the aggravations of it, which are necessary deeply to affect the soul.

*Secondly*, The world did not understand the sin of their nature. The world would not acknowledge it for unrighteousness, would not apprehend itself in a state of sin, because of their commendable qualities in the eyes of others. The world is not sensible of its change from the image of God by creation into the image of the devil by corruption. It understands not the extent of original sin, the depravation of their rational faculties, the lameness and impotency of their free will, nor the sinfulness of the first motions of their hearts; nature applauds its own power and self-ability in the midst of its weakness, and an affection to God under a boiling enmity.

*Thirdly*, The world did not understand the sin of unbelief. As the light of nature could not discover a Christ to them, so it could not discover the sin of unbelief to them; how could it convince of their unbelief, when it did not discover the object to be believed in. But the Spirit shall convince of a state of sin, of the depths of it in the heart, the streams of it in the life, and especially of unbelief, which renders the disease incurable, since there is no other medicine but the blood of Christ, and no other way of partaking of that medicine but by faith; it will evidence they are born in sin, can do nothing but sin, and cannot but by faith be delivered from those bonds of sin, but must die in them; that if they believe not in Christ, that came to redeem fallen mankind, their sins will lie on them, they will perish in them, and lie under the curse of God. Now that sin in general is here meant—the Spirit shall convince of sin—as the object of the Spirit's conviction, is clear, because,

First, He names it in general, as noting the whole mass of sin.

Secondly, Because it is in vain to convince men of the sinfulness of their unbelief, unless they be convinced first of the necessity of faith. And what ground have they to be convinced of the necessity of faith, unless they find such loads of sin upon them as they are never able to bear, such guilt as they are never able to answer for, or remove from themselves?

Thirdly, Because the Holy Ghost condemns all other sins, as well as unbelief, and therefore convinceth of them; not only of unbelief, but other sins that stand in the way of salvation.

Fourthly, The Spirit in the text was to pronounce the whole world out of Christ to be in a state of sin and death; because, when the world would plead its righteousness, and seem to establish trophies to itself, shield itself by its own righteousness, the Spirit should condemn that righteousness as not sufficient, because else it had been in vain for God to send his Son to work another righteousness. That is the first thing, the Spirit was to convince of sin.

II. The Spirit was to convince of righteousness.

1. Some refer it to the righteousness of Christ's person; that is, his going to the Father was an evidence that he was a just person; heaven would not else have entertained him; it would have been no receptacle for an impostor, and one that to his last gasp should persist in a known crime. The Spirit should convince the world by undeniable testimonies and demonstrations, that he was an innocent person, that he was no malefactor when he suffered.

2. Others refer it to the righteousness of Christ's office, and his merits imputed to believers. And, indeed, the coming of the Spirit was a testimony of his acceptance with the Father, for the Spirit had not come in such a miraculous manner as was manifest in the apostles, had not Christ in heaven had an acceptance of his sufferings from his Father.

3. Others understand it thus, He shall convince of the insufficiency of human righteousness. By the light of nature men had some particular notions of justice. By nature, they knew in some measure what was right; they knew they were not to do wrong, that they were to be advantageous to the community; they knew they were to cherish those that had been beneficial to them: hence they deified those that were public benefactors, either by the discovery of arts that were useful to human societies, or the defence of their country in an invasion, or the delivery of those that were oppressed, from the common plagues and scourges of mankind. These they boasted of, their moral virtues, their invented worship, the service of their gods, and their good intentions. Now, since by the light of nature men could not conceive of a higher righteousness than justice between man and man, and an external devotion towards God, the Spirit was to convince them of the weakness of this conceited righteousness, and the want of a better, shewing that Christ's righteousness is the only true righteousness of God, because he is gone to the Father, and shall not return again to be a sacrifice for sin. For if righteousness should have been by works, Christ had died in vain.

III. The Spirit was to convince of judgment. Some understand it that the judgment of this world concerning Christ was unjust; and the Spirit was to convince that it was so. Others, to convince of the damnation of the devil, and consequently of all that adhered to him: 'Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' Others, of the deliverance of man, which was evidenced by the condemnation of the devil, subduing him upon the cross, taking away that sin whereby he had power over man. Others, of the judgment of the world concerning oracles, superstition, and the worship of idols, which they thought an acceptable worship. The Spirit should convince that this was a false judgment, since the devil was cast down from his chair of oracles, and the mouth of the father of lies was stopped, and the prince that usurped the government of the world, and to whom men paid ready obedience, was cast out and stripped of his power; also, *convince of judgment*, of the consequent of this righteousness and merit of Christ, and the certainty of God's judgment concerning him; because the devil is cast out, which is a sufficient evidence that God hath adjudged the victory to Christ, since the devil is dismounted of his power; and that perfection of holiness and freedom from sin shall be obtained at last, since the great captain of sin is slain, and there is no hopes of his rising again to secure his own standing, or destroy a believer's interest; for if the power of the Captain of their salvation did in his humiliation break the strength of the devil, much more in the state of exaltation will he keep him from ever reducing his people to that misery wherein they were before. And in this part of convincing, the Spirit did work as a comforter. Now, to 'convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' and to shew the further extent of

sin, and the necessity of another righteousness, required a mighty power; since these apprehensions which the world had, had reigned so long in them, and the new propositions and declarations were in themselves incredible to blear-eyed reason. Who could imagine that the Son of God should take flesh, and die upon the cross, and the devil be conquered and ruined by the death of the Son of God? Who could have imagined these things? Had the Son of God come in triumph into the world, with legions of angels, and visibly cast the devil from his throne, and visibly given forth his laws, then the world could not but have believed on him, and submitted to him: but to talk of a victory over a living devil by a dying man; of the necessity of believing in a crucified person, that suffered death as the vilest malefactor; to speak of the righteousness of God, wrought by one that was put to death as a criminal and a blasphemer, in the judgment of a whole nation, and his own countrymen too; these were such seeming contradictions to the weak reason of the world, without the divine light of the Spirit manifesting the reason, and divine methods, and the nature of the things which he was to instruct men in, as a comforter, as a teacher of the world, that they could not possibly take place in them by any less power than an almighty one.

One thing more: some think these convictions not to be by an inward illumination, but by an objective testimony of the Spirit, by miracles and extraordinary gifts conferred on the apostles, whereby the truth of what Christ had said and spoke was confirmed and demonstrated. Though this be true, yet it is not all: there was an objective conviction by miracles; but was not there also a secret inward conviction by inspiration? The Spirit was not only to dwell *among* men, or *with* them by outward acts, but *in* them, John xiv. 17. The Spirit was to be sent into the heart by an inward operation, as well as by an outward demonstration of miracles, and the Father and the Son promised to make their abode with the souls of believers, and manifest themselves to them: how, except in this manner? All the works of the Spirit are couched in this act of convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. What is to be done here, but hating sin and encouraging our faith in Christ, because of his merit and his ascension to the Father, and heightening our hopes by the assurance of the conquest of sin and Satan? And all these are the acts of the Spirit in every believer, more or less, to the end of the world. The convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, do in a manner comprehend all the acts of the Spirit in a believer. Therefore, it is more than an objective conviction. Thus much concerning the words. I shall pitch upon these two observations:

*Obs.* 1. That the Spirit of God is the author of conviction of sin. And,

*Obs.* 2. That unbelief (that being the reason rendered, 'of sin, because they believe not on me') is a sin of the greatest malignity against God, and danger to the soul. But for the

First, The Spirit is to convince of sin: not only in general, but in particular, of unbelief, consequently of the root whence it grows, the food that maintains it, and every sin that stops the entrance of the grace of faith. He was to shew the demerits of sin, whereby men might apprehend and be ascertained of the necessity of believing in the Mediator proposed, when they saw the depths of filthiness broken up, and the mountains of sin discovered, and not a mite of solid righteousness visible either in their natures or actions. The Spirit of God is the author of the conviction of sin. I shall shew,

First, That the Spirit doth convince of sin.

Secondly, It is necessary the Spirit should thoroughly convince of sin, if ever a man be convinced.

Thirdly, How and by what means the Spirit doth work this conviction.



Fourthly, What sin, or what in sin, he doth most convince of.

Fifthly, What the difference is between convictions proceeding from the Spirit more immediately, and those from any other cause.

Sixthly, The use.

I. That the Spirit doth convince of sin. We shall speak to it in some propositions.

First, All convictions of sin do, either mediately or immediately, come from the Spirit of God. As it is commonly said, whencesoever truth immediately cometh, it originally ariseth from the Holy Spirit; so, whatsoever the instrument be, the principal cause of the application of conviction is from the Spirit. There is a common and a special work of the Holy Ghost. All convictions of men, though they may some of them arise from some more immediate cause by the word, are the Spirit's work efficiently, by the word instrumentally. Conscience is naturally a dead and stupid thing, man a brutish creature, being fallen; and, being flesh, he resists and disputes against any convictions of sin; and therefore, if conscience be not stirred up by the Spirit, it would never rise up in any self-reflection: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh.' As man, being flesh, is perverse against the reasonings of the Spirit, so, being flesh, he would never have the least distaste of any iniquity, unless the Spirit did excite those relics of natural light which remain in the soul. As those relics do remain in us by virtue of the mediation of Christ, so all the awakenings of them to any sense, or the reformations which have been wrought thereupon in the world, have been by the Spirit of Christ. All the sense that any of those of the old world had, was from the inward motion of the Spirit inviting them to repentance: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man;' implying that it did strive, and it was in subserviency to Christ the Mediator that the Spirit did strive with that generation of men. Upon which account Christ is said by the Spirit to go and 'preach to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah,' 1 Pet. iii. 20.

It was that Spirit of holiness and truth whereby Christ was quickened, which was no other than the Holy Ghost; and these disobedient persons to whom Christ preached thus by his Spirit, are called spirits, in relation to the state wherein they now are in prison, before the resurrection, not in relation to the state wherein they were when the Spirit did strive with them. Whatsoever sense there was upon any in the old world, was from the striving of the Spirit of God with them, as the Spirit of the Mediator, by whose interposition those relics which were in them were kept up, and that reason which they had was conveyed to them, and did remain in them. By this Spirit Christ is said to go and preach unto them. So that all motions of conscience, all convictions, whether upon those that reject them, or those that receive them, are from the Spirit as the Spirit of the Mediator. From this power did the terrors of Cain and Judas arise, so far as it was the work of illumination, exciting their rational faculties, though the sin and unbelief in those terrors did not arise from the Spirit. The stick stirs the water by the child's agitation, the mud is raised, though the stick doth not convey the mud to it, nor immediately touch it, but by the water. When the discovery of sin in its evil is made by the Spirit, that is a good work; but if men abstain from that sin, the evil of which they see, out of a servile principle, that is evil; the discovery and restraint is good, but the principle is evil, being the effect, not of any love to God, but enmity to him, and love to themselves. All the convictions of sin do either mediately or immediately come from the Spirit

of God in any person whatsoever, it is from his striving with them that they do arise.

Secondly, This is the office of the Spirit. The word *comforter*, *παράκλητος*, signifies an advocate, and is so translated when it is used of Christ : 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Now, the office of an advocate is to convince the party he appears against of his crime, and the injury he hath done to his client ; to answer his reason, and stop his mouth, and make the matter of fact evident. The convincing work of the Spirit is an advocacy to the soul ; he appears and manageth the cause as an advocate ; he arms himself with the curses of the law against it. He is an advocate for God and his righteousness in the law ; but in the work of consolation the Spirit is an advocate for the soul, and the righteousness of the gospel, against the rigours of the law ; so that, while the Spirit is an advocate against the soul, he must as necessarily accuse and argue against it, as when he is an advocate for the soul, he must refresh and pacify it, and plead for its support. In regard of this office he is called 'a spirit of bondage' : Rom. viii. 15, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage,' &c. ; which, though some would understand only of the outward Mosaic dispensation, it seems to be an inward work of the Spirit in the hearts of men. The intent of the apostle may be sometimes to shew the liberty of believers from the ceremonial law, to which the Jews were in bondage ; but it doth not appear that it was the intent of the apostle in this place. Yea, it is to be considered that he wrote to the Christians in Rome, who were not all Jews, and very likely but a few of them were so, and so were never under the bondage of the Jewish ceremonies, but the burden of Pagan rites. As he is a 'Spirit of adoption,' exciting the soul to cry *Abba*, Father, he works orderly in the heart after faith ; therefore, as he is a Spirit of bondage, he stirs up fears inwardly in the heart before faith. The apostle speaks in the former part of the chapter of the actings of the Spirit in believers, of the Spirit's dwelling in them ; the necessity of a man's having the Spirit of Christ for 'mortifying the deeds of the body' through the Spirit, which respects men in particular in a state of faith ; therefore what he means here is an inward work in the hearts of men, as well as the other operations of the Spirit, which he mentions both before and after it ; so that the Spirit of bondage respects men in particular before a state of conversion ; he is sent into the heart as a Spirit of bondage. Terrors, therefore, which are inward in the soul, and are called the Lord's terrors, Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16, are here called the Spirit of bondage ; not as if it bound the soul, but discovers those bonds which are by nature upon it, lays open the judgments of God against it, sets conscience at work to gall men for sin, and giveth not only a notional knowledge, but a sensible feeling of the weight of them. As he is called the 'Spirit of truth' and the 'Spirit of adoption,' because he applies the promises of grace, so he is called the 'Spirit of bondage,' as he gives a sight of those fetters that are clapped on by sin and Satan, and applies the law as a ministration of death, as that whereby the man is concluded or shut up under sin, and at present sees no way to escape. Now, the natural consequent and effect of this work must needs be fear. As the contagion of sin is discerned by the law, and the curses of the law, without the appearance of the evangelical remedy, there must needs be pangs and terrors. The law shews only the guilt, but not the pardon ; opens the command and threatening, but whispers not a syllable of comfort without perfect obedience. In the application of the threatenings, he is a Spirit of bondage ; in the application of the promises, he is a Spirit of adoption. As he flashes fire in the face of a sinner, so he strews comforts in the heart of a believer.

Thirdly, The Spirit is the infuser of all grace in the heart, and therefore is the author of all preparations to grace, or anything that hath any tendency that way. It is by the Spirit of grace any are made sensible of their piercing Christ, Zech. xii. 10, and brought to mourn over him. The same Spirit that springs up their mournful tears, fixeth their believing eye, both upon their sin, and on the person they had abused by it: 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,' Rom. v. 5, as he manifests the love of God to us, or raiseth up our love to God; which cannot be without loathing sin, and a sense of it in the heart and life, to enable the soul to hate it. The true sense of God's goodness cannot be without the sense of our naughtiness. When the Spirit doth both these, it is a Spirit of adoption; when it works only a sense of sin, it is a Spirit of bondage. As all righteousness and truth are works of the Spirit, so all works that are antecedaneous to, and necessary for, the attaining and preserving true righteousness, are the fruits of the Spirit, among which deep convictions are none of the least. It is by the Spirit that we see, as well as crucify, the lusts of the flesh.

Fourthly, The Spirit of God is promised in the times of the gospel, for such operations as this of conviction, as 'a Spirit of judgment,' and 'a Spirit of burning:' 'When the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning,' Isa. iv. 4. A spirit of judgment to convince them, a spirit of burning to refine them, and consume their greater and lesser iniquities. He cites the soul before a tribunal, before he baptizes it with fire to refine it; and that this is to be understood of gospel times, will appear from the 2d verse, 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious'; and this is part of that excellent fruit that shall be in the earth. In regard of this the Spirit is called fire, to scorch in conviction and self-condemnation by its heat, as well as to comfort by its light and warmth: Isa. xl. 7, 'The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, because of the Spirit of the Lord that bloweth upon it.' Our carnal confidences stand firm until he hews them down; our righteousness is amiable until the Spirit blows upon it, and dissolves its paint; beautiful, until the Spirit snatches off the disguise. This is a gospel promise, that flesh should appear what it is. It should be made desolate, and convictions be wrought in men of the ugliness of sin, and the emptiness of their own righteousness, and the insufficiency of everything that comes under the title of flesh. This is a gospel promise of what the Spirit should do when the glory of the Lord should be revealed. Flesh should appear to be what it is, a manifest conviction be wrought of the ugliness of sin, the emptiness of our own righteousness, the insufficiency of everything that cometh under the title of flesh. The

II. Second thing is to shew, that it is necessary the Spirit should do this work of convincing. There is as much need of the Spirit to convince us of the guilt of sin, while we are in a state of nature, as there is of the Spirit to comfort us under the apprehensions of guilt, and the charge of an accusing conscience. There is as much need of the Spirit to do the one as to do the other. For,

1. The light of fallen nature is insufficient of itself to cause a thorough conviction. It is true, there is a natural law in men's hearts, which discovers some duties to be done, some gross impieties to be avoided. There are common notions left in man which may conduct him in a moral course, without which human society could not be preserved. These are, that there is a God, that this God is to be worshipped, that he is righteous, who re-

wards those that seek him, that there are evil actions worthy of death, that there is a judgment to be inflicted upon the commission of sin, a self-satisfaction and peace in the avoiding of it, and performing such things as are good, and comely, and honest, and of good report ; and from such principles as these, common in man, those laws in all nations against enormities, which are praiseworthy, and are the bands and ligaments of society and of government, did arise. Now, these habitual principles in the mind, if read over, will judge and censure some acts of unrighteousness : some 'works of the flesh are manifest, such as these, adultery, fornication,' &c., Gal. v. 19, clear by natural light to be the works of the flesh. Conscience must more or less naturally set in order before a man's eyes some sort of unrighteousness, such unrighteous actions which are contrary to those implanted notions, and plainly tell them, without any other proof than what is in them, that 'they that do such things are worthy of death,' Rom. i. 32 ; because they are against the universal law imprinted in human nature, and against the acknowledged principles placed in us by God. For the knowledge of righteousness and sin, and also of God's piercing eye, whereby he seeth all sin, and of his impartial justice, which hath store of punishments for the violaters of his law, is almost as deeply imprinted upon the mind of man by nature as the notion of a God ; for, indeed, they do naturally flow from the notion of a supreme cause, the governor of the world. Wherefore, in many cases, God appeals to men's reason, and the principles that are left in them, Isa. v. 3, Ezek. xviii. 25, and is willing to stand to the unbiassed judgment of their own minds. But natural light discovers not sin so fully as it is necessary for a man to be convinced of it, in order to the entertainment of Christ, and the grace of God in and by him. For natural light,

First, Discovers not the root of sin. But there is a necessity a man should be convinced of the root of sin. Men do not by nature understand the universal pollution of their nature, nor feel the heaviness of the sin of Adam. It shews us that something is amiss, and much amiss, but whence this disorder doth arise nature of itself is wholly ignorant, hath not so much as a regular guess, without revelation. The light of nature is too dim to pierce into the depths of evil ; it acquaints not with the *fomes* of sin, and that inward strength of evil that gave birth and nourishment to those uncouth actions ; some actual evils it discerns to be so, but not the depraved principle of them. Some actual evils are loathsome to men by nature, but not the principle of them ; men are not sensible what possession the evil spirit of Adam hath of their souls. There must be, therefore, some other light to pierce through the clouds of nature, and search into the depths of the belly, and bring to view that habitual inconformity of our nature, to that rectitude required of us, and once possessed by us.

Secondly, It discovers not sin as the greatest evil in the world, neither did ever nature hate sin as such, because nature is not endowed with any spiritual affections by its natural descent. It never had a due sense either of the authority or holiness of the lawgiver, nor ever considered sin as a contempt of the sovereignty and purity of the lawgiver and his law, wherein, indeed, the intrinsic evil of sin doth consist, James ii. 10, 11. Nature did excite some fears upon the guilt of sin, but no grief for the filth of sin. Men by nature respect sin as it stands in relation to the justice and omniscience of God, as it is the object of his sight and knowledge, and the object of his revenging justice and wrath, but not as it stands in contrariety to the purity of God. As it is an afflictive evil they may regard it, but not as it is a polluting evil ; as staining their reputation, not as defiling their souls. Nature giveth us but a little prospect of the beauty of God's holiness, whereby we

must measure the heinousness, malignity, and odiousness of sin. As from the weakness of the relics of natural light there are no strong and powerful motions to God, because, though nature discovers something of God, yet not in all his perfections, and the amiableness of his nature; so the convictions of sin are weak, because there is not by that light a discovery of the abominableness of it to God, and the intrinsic pollution, which is as essential to sin as guilt. Neither, indeed, doth nature discover the consequences of sin in their dreadfulfulness, and that wrath which will at last meet with it, and overflow the sinner. The mind, therefore, must be enlightened by some higher power to understand the holiness of God, thereby to conceive the impurity of sin.

Thirdly, Nature discovers not the extent of sin in the invisible and secret veins of it. Many branches of sin are invisible to nature; it doth not discover sin in its latitude. Nature acquaints not with all the duties to be done, nor the manner how to do them; therefore, tells not of all the sins we are to shun, nor the manner how to avoid them. It utters not a syllable of Christ the mediator, in whose name we are to perform our duties, nor of the sanctifying Spirit, in whose strength we are to perform them; nor of faith, through which principle we are to do them; nor of the glory of God in all the ways of it, for which end we are to do them; nor of the evangelical promises, from which we are to take encouragement for the doing of them; and, consequently, doth not shew the extent of sin, which consists in the failing in all these. It did, indeed, dictate since the fall that God was to be worshipped, and that with the best strength of the creature, but not the manner and way of that worship, and therefore informs not of sins committed against the true worship of God. It discovers not the sinfulness of the first motions, and of the inward workings of lust. The Jews, that had the improvements of nature by the discoveries of the law, knew not the first inward motions, when stifled, to be sin. They needed, though not the correction of the law, yet the interpretation of our Saviour in his sermon on the mount. What sins nature did make a discovery of, it did only manifest in some pieces and parts, not in the whole scope of them. As the light of nature did not shew the law of God in its wideness, so neither sin in its foulness. It is necessary, therefore, that there should be some higher power to discover those sins that are beyond the ken of natural light. By the light of the sun we see the atoms and motes, that we can never discern by the light of the stars.

Fourthly, Nature discovers not unbelief, the greatest sin of all. Nature doth not convince of unbelief; what sight of it can nature direct us to? The works of creation evidence not the mystery of redemption, so the light of creation doth not evidence the sins against that mystery. The light of nature discovers a Creator, but not a Redeemer; because, though God made the world in order to that glory he intended to get by redemption, yet he made not the world as a Redeemer. And though it was made by that person who was the Redeemer, yet it was not made in the way of redemption, nor with the manifestation of those attributes of love, wisdom, and righteousness, which were evident in the work of redemption.

A toad, upon the view of its image in a glass, knows not its own deformity, nor the excellency of a man, or some other creature superior to it, and therefore knows not how to measure its own deformity; nor doth a natural man, with his depraved reason, know himself by the glass of the word to be of a viperous brood, without some common work of the Spirit. Men by nature are not ashamed of sin as sin: Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had ye then in

those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?' Now ashamed, intimating that in the state of nature they were not ashamed. They were now ashamed under the new light whereby they saw them in their nature, not before, under their natural darkness, wherewith their eyes were closed. Nature never discovers its own deformity. That is the first thing; the light of nature is insufficient to discover or convince thoroughly of sin. Nature is insufficient for this work.

(2.) The law barely of itself doth not convince thoroughly of all sin. It discovers, indeed, more clearly some sins than the light of nature, in regard it doth more evidence the sovereign authority and holy nature of God, and consequently discovers the nature of guilt and the greatness of the filth of sin, and brings to view upon an examination of the heart those little sprouts and branches of sin in the first motion which are not visible by star-light; yet this discovers not the main condemning sin, it discovers not the work of redemption by Christ. It commands faith in what God reveals, but not faith with such a modification, directed to such an object as a dying Redeemer. The voice of the law is not, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' but 'Do this and live.' The knowledge of other sins is by the law, but the knowledge of unbelief by the gospel. Yet this doth not convince us of all actual sins of itself, not in regard of the inability of it as a rule, or want of perfection in its prohibition of sin, but in regard, not only of the multitude of our sins and infirmities, but the weakness of our nature. Whence David, Ps. xix. 12, cries out of secret sins, 'Who can understand the errors of his life? Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults.' He rightly imagined there were more sins in him than fell under his discovery by that light. These properties of the law can never be exercised but in the hand of God, as it is an instrument of his managing and directing. How few souls, among those multitudes of the Israelites, were rightly and thoroughly convinced by the thunderings at mount Sinai, at the first publishing of the law! The word is a sword, yet the sword of the Spirit, and can no more make gashes in the conscience without the Spirit to wield it, than a sword can pierce and cut without a strong arm to add force to its edge. God himself appearing to a man by his bare word to his ear, without exerting a power on his heart, cometh short of attaining to this end. It was not presently that Adam came to a downright acknowledgment of his sin, though charged with it by God in the garden. Nor did Cain come to a kindly conviction and confession of his sin, after all God's disputes with him about his sin, and manifestations of his patience in making a hedge of his providence round about him. So that the law, as it doth not discover all sin, sins which are immediately against the gospel, so it is unable of itself to convince without some powerful hand, the power of the Spirit of God, to manage it. The reason of this insufficiency is,

First, The wrong notion of things, and the blindness of mind, in natural men under the gospel. It is a notion that will not enter into the hearts of men naturally, that sin is so odious and abominable to God. Many things they count very light, and prop up themselves with a hope of mercy, and it will not enter into their heart (it is so deeply inlaid in their natures), that there is need of the death of the Son of God to take away the guilt of sin, and the power of the Spirit to wash away the filth of it. They are not ready to believe this, unless the arm of the Lord pull up such notions, and root others in them. Hence Isaiah cries out, 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Who hath believed that ever sin is attended with that guilt that the Messiah must be smitten of God,

stricken and afflicted, to repair the breaches sin hath made? We have false opinions of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and therefore the Spirit doth confute an opinion (as the word ἐλέγχειν signifies) which had been settled in the soul; it shews us sins we never dreamt of, a righteousness we never imagined, and a new fountain of holiness. Rom. i. 21, 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.' Man believes he is as God created him; he is ignorant of the corruption of his blood, believes himself holy in his unholiness, righteous in his unrighteousness. Vice is hid in the soul, worse than any outward disease in the body. Men easily find their bodies ill-affected, but understand not the state of their souls possessed by sin, because the understanding, which should judge of the disease, is ill-affected itself. The foolish heart of man is darkened, and being darkened cannot understand the disease, because that is the power of judging, and that being corrupted, cannot judge in the things it suffers. This makes soul-diseases naturally incurable, causeth men to refuse the medicines, shun all means of recovery, and be angry with them that apply remedies. Men may converse with the law, understand the letter of it, while they are ignorant of the intent; a man may see a glass without a reflection on himself. Paul, a pharisee, was a student in the law, a doctor fit to teach the letter of the law, yet there was a veil between him and the spirit of it, until the Spirit held the law close to his conscience, Rom. vii. 9. We may have the outward letter and outward work too, when yet the brightness of it, by reason of the thick mist on the mind, reacheth not the remote part of the soul. Bring a man that hath lost sight and smell into a nasty filthy place, he knoweth not but that it is a beautiful garden, until his eyes be opened and his smell restored. Therefore there is a necessity of the Spirit to enlighten the mind in this first work as well as in all consequential acts. A necessity of the Spirit to enlighten our minds, who, in regard of his omniscience, is able by the light of the word to bring sins to view, out of their skulks and hiding-places. How great is this ignorance of themselves in the best! We know but in part, and as 'in a glass darkly,' either God or ourselves. And as we stand in need of an high priest to pity us under our infirmities, so of the Spirit to discover them to us, that we may have a spiritual discerning of a spiritual mischief. For as there is a common natural and a spiritual knowledge of God, so there is a natural and a spiritual knowledge of sin: natural when men know such a thing to be sin, but spiritual when they understand the spiritual filth, and pollution, and mischief of sin. There is need of the Spirit that we may spiritually discern the spiritual mischief, that we may know spiritual truths in a spiritual manner, that we may know sins also with a spiritual eye. Since the darkness of the mind is the cause of a vain walking, Eph. iv. 17, 18, that can never be in any sort a remedy, which is the cause of the disease, therefore the wrong notions of men make them incapable of working this conviction upon themselves by the law.

Secondly, Another reason is, a natural enmity to any such discovery, which is universal in all men. There is nothing men more naturally abhor than any thing tending to the rooting out those vicious habits they are deeply in love withal. As men, when they know God, have no mind to glorify him as God, so men, when they cannot avoid the knowledge of the threatenings of God, have no mind to believe them and consider them as the threatenings of God. Convincing arguments always meet with contradiction from nature. It is for this very reason men hate the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd, their deeds they be convinc'd of: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doth evil hates the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds

should be reprov'd ;' which light they would love well enough were it not attended with so unpleasing an effect. Our Saviour pronounceth it universally of all mankind, ' Every one that doth evil hates the light ;' and who by nature can pretend an exemption ? Not a man by nature but abhors more to have a conviction of sin, than the best believer abhors those deeds he is convinced of ; and this makes the conviction utterly impossible by the mere strength of nature. Hence we are compared to wild asses, that snuff up the wind, endure hunger and thirst, undergo any inconvenience, rather than be convinced of a miserable state, and submit to be reduced to a better. Hence where do you find a man that yields to the first arguments brought against his lusts, but struggles and strives against such conviction ? Nay, do they not cherish their beloved sins under rebukes, draw a curtain between themselves and the law, and will see no faults in what they affect ? What an irrational folly did possess the pharisees, who, because Christ by raising Lazarus had got a name and a greater number of disciples, would have killed Christ and him, as though that power that raised Lazarus, after he had been dead three days, could not have preserved him from them, or, if they had killed him, could not have raised him again, and restored life to him as often as they had stripped him of it, or turned them into their graves ! So hard is it to convince men of sin, yea, and of common and rational truths, against the overruling love of their passions and interests. There is need then of some superior power to set the light before men, and fix their eyes upon it ; for naturally men reject all impressions which come upon them from any declaration of truth, and are no more friends to it than darkness is in league with light, and cannot from themselves have any due reverence to the word on the account of the authority of it, and the holiness of God the author of it, but endeavour to extinguish it as soon as ever they see any sparks of it in their hearts.

Thirdly, The weakness and falseness of natural conscience is another thing that proves nature's insufficiency to such a work.

(1.) The weakness of it. Conscience, indeed, hath a natural power of judgment, but not higher than the light in it. A clear light is necessary to a right judgment ; and when there is a light in it, yet itself being dull and sleepy, must be roused up to perform its office. As original corruption hath darkened the mind and enfeebled the will, so it hath darkened this faculty (for there is no room in the house that is privileged from infection), and the greater the strength of sin, the weaker is the sense of it ; for the defilement increaseth the insensibility, Eph. iv. 19, which is the state of men by nature, it being the state of all the Gentiles. The fuller of dead works, the more listless must it be in its office ; for the strength of sin puts the conscience under a restraint, and makes that a prisoner to it, which should be a spy and monitor against it ; ' who hold the truth in unrighteousness.' There is an imprisonment of truth, and though conscience doth sometimes reflect the light of the law upon the soul, yet because of its weakness it is as unable to fire the soul as a small spark is to inflame a reeking dunghill, or a burning-glass to fire anything when the sun is masked with thick clouds and fogs. Sometimes conscience makes false determinations and reflections for want of knowledge ; sometimes no reflections by reason of stupefaction by sin, which is the effect of every sin, till it be roused by the voice of God. Perhaps Adam's conscience might be put almost into as deep a sleep by sin as his body had been by his Creator when he took Eve out of it ; for though he was sensible after his fall of his being stripped of his righteousness, yet he doth not seem to be convinced of his sin till God had spoke, which awakened his conscience. Just after by his sin he fell from so great and so happy an estate, the Scripture



giveth no remark of any affrightment he had till he heard the voice of God. Prisoners are jolly in the gaol till they hear of the coming of the judge, though they know the crimes they are guilty of. In some, conscience is so sleepy, or rather dead, that it may be said of them, as of those, Acts xix. 2, who when they were asked 'whether they had received the Holy Ghost,' they 'had not heard of such a thing as the Holy Ghost:' so these have not heard of such a thing as conscience.

(2.) The falseness of conscience, and its easiness to be deceived, shews the unlikelihood of nature's ever convincing. An 'evil conscience,' being opposed to a 'true heart,' by the apostle, Heb. x. 22, is a false conscience. The falseness of conscience lies in not pressing what it knows. Every man by nature hath the same general and natural notions which a renewed man hath; but conscience makes not the soul sensible of what it knows, by urging things, and bringing them to a particular application, and drawing them out in rank and file. Though it hath a commission as God's deputy, yet it neglects its charge, is bribed, and overawed, like an officer in a town, who neglects the trust reposed in him by the governor. It is apt to be deceived by outward performances, which doth incapacitate it to convince men thoroughly; it is apt to have its mouth stopped by the husk of a duty instead of a kernel; it troubles rather for gross sins than for spiritual ones; nay, it doth not ordinarily rebuke for any spiritual sin; leaves off reproving, and rather applauds men when they engage in outward performances; saith, 'Well done, good and faithful servant;' it is usually contented with the outward performance, though there be more of self in it than of aim at God's glory; with the work of the law, though there be not the power of the law written in the heart. If it hath any voice at all, it is not loud, but faint, like that of Eli to his sons, Do no more so; and it is apt to speak peace when there is no ground of peace. This is universally the disease of conscience in natural men. It conspires with the other faculties, not to be injurious to the carnal interest in the soul. There must therefore be, on the account of its falseness and weakness, some higher power to rouse a sleepy conscience, rectify a depraved conscience. Unless the eye be more piercing, the judgment more sound, conviction can have no progress. Until the bullet be shot by the Spirit, it will fall short of the mark.

Fourthly, A fourth reason which shews the insufficiency of nature to such an end is the false disguises of sin, and the pretences for it, which make the universal conviction of it impossible to nature. Besides those notions of sin which naturally are in men's own minds, they are swayed much by the common sentiments of others concerning this or that practice; and when any vice is esteemed a virtue, it is above the power of nature to affect the heart with that which is commonly applauded as a matter of praise. The sinfulness of actions which are attended with profit and honour is not easily perceived; the whole bent of nature stands in defence of them, interest, profit, and credit; whatsoever is dear to men, they are mighty champions for it. Covetous, and ambitious, and proud men, and whosoever are guilty of those sins that stream from these fountains, do not easily acknowledge their crimes, because they lie hid in the heart, they continually besiege the mind, fill up all corners of the soul, that true reason hath not room to lift up its hand. Those that are given to sensual pleasures and intemperance appear more easily to acknowledge their sins in the intervals of lust, because these are more brutish; but as for others their sins are more refined, accounted necessary and generous; they have cloaks and covers for them of frugality, fortitude, &c. Whence it appears men are more easily brought to a sense of, and turning from, brutish vices than from internal ones, those which spring

up from a root more fast settled in the heart, those vices which bring in honour, profit, and esteem, such being more dear to men than those of pleasure, which may be laid aside, and men being at great pains in undertaking to nourish their ambition. In some things, men have an imagination they act generously and bravely, even in their vices, which renders them more inflexible to any reflections of conscience, and shews a necessity of some higher power to take off the mask of sin, and discover it without its disguise.

Fifthly, The subtle evasions of carnal reason render the universal conviction of sin impossible to mere nature. What glosses will a winding wit put upon sin, present evil as good, and good as evil! Ever since man drew in the serpent's breath, he hath imitated the tempter in this his masterpiece of false representations. Excuses for sin are equally derived with the sin of our nature from our first parents in their first sin. Adam and Eve did not deny their crimes, but cast the blame from themselves, Adam upon Eve, Eve upon the serpent. And Adam wraps God himself up in the society of his crime, charging it on that snare that his wife was to him. Thus great sinners imagine themselves innocent, when they can excuse their sin by the inducement of others, and the constitution of their bodies, as if anything could force the will; they will have subtle distinctions for the extenuating of their sin, though their spots appear in all their garments, and may be seen without searching for. Men will not many times believe themselves sinners, by reason of the subtle distinctions that a corrupt wit will find out, though their blackness be as visible as that of a negro, and argue against strong rebukes as much as a troubled conscience will against grounds of comfort. Men naturally stand upon a sense of honour, are loath to condemn themselves under apparent crimes, and for fear of punishment will rather reflect upon God, and by distinctions blunt the edge of his word. And there are other corrupt reasonings, by promises of future repentance, hopes of mercy, entitling presumptuous sins infirmities, and such as all men by nature are incident to, whereby they nonplus conscience and delude their souls; and though they confess sin in the general, yet they suspend as to a particular confession. Till this self-love be discovered and overawed by the Spirit, little good is to be expected. There is therefore need of the Spirit, *ἐλεγχεν*, to confute these calumnies and stop men's mouths, and bring down the contrivers and inventors of them to lick the dust. God only, who is omniscient, and knows all the wards of the heart, can search the secret parts of it, and bring sin to light, and the soul to spiritual reason.

Sixthly, The natural levity and inconstancy of the soul, renders it impossible to nature to convince. It is from this instability, those wrestings of Scripture, and evasions to turn away the dint of a rebuking argument, do arise: 2 Peter iii. 16, 'Which they that are unstable and unlearned, wrest to their own destruction.' They are naturally like clouds which have no certain basis, therefore as soon can a natural cloud fix as they. Hence, men's convictions are like fits of an ague, which have their intervals, and at last wear quite away. Man can have no composedness nor consistency in himself, while he is hurried about by various ends and objects, while in a state of nature. All the power of nature can no more make an impression on such fluid persons, than a man can draw a picture upon the water, or plough the rivers, and make them receive seed and bring forth fruit. Instability scatters and divides the powers of the soul, that they cannot unite in any serious reflections. So that you see nature is utterly insufficient, and there is a necessity of some higher power than nature to convince the soul of sin. I shall add a,

(3.) Third argument. As neither nature nor law can do it upon those

accounts, and therefore there is a necessity of the Spirit for this purpose ; so it is necessary that this thorough conviction which ends in conversion, should be the work of the Spirit, in regard of the honour of God, that the whole new state, with all its antecedents, as well as consequents, may be of God ; that the hewing the stone, as well as setting it in the building, the preparations of the members, as well as uniting them to the head, may owe itself only to the divine power, that all cause of glorying in ourselves may be cut off, according to the intent of the gospel. If a man should convince himself, and make himself sensible of sin, though afterwards he should be brought to a through conversion and close with Christ, yet the glory of the first sense and preparation will be the glory of the flesh ; but all flesh, in everything which concerns our recovery, must be silent before God. As the Spirit doth all things about the head Christ, so he doth all things about those he intends his members. As Christ was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil, that he might have a sense of sin, and be acquainted with the craft and subtilty of that adversary, which had brought all the dishonour upon God, and sunk all mankind in misery ; so the Spirit doth convince his members of sin, suits the word providentially to make impressions, worketh and preserves these impressions in them, that the whole work, the ploughing up the fallow ground of the heart, as well as the sowing the seed in it, may redound to the glory of God in the entire praise of it.

So that, you see, it is necessary the Spirit should convince of sin. Nature cannot do it, cannot convince of the root of sin, and it cannot convince of the evil of sin, and it cannot convince of the latitude of sin, nor of unbelief. And the law, that cannot convince of unbelief, nor indeed of any sin, without the Spirit's management of it, it being the sword of the Spirit. The reason of the insufficiency of nature, which is, the wrong notions of things, the blindness of mind under the gospel, and a natural enmity universally in every man that doth evil against any such discovery, the weakness and falseness of natural conscience, and the false disguises of sin, pretences for it ; all which render universal convictions impossible ; and so doth the levity and unstedfastness of the soul ; beside the necessity of it for the honour of God.

III. The third question is, How doth the Spirit work these convictions ? And before I speak to that, take only this caution. Though the Spirit doth work these convictions in the hearts of men, and it is necessary he should, yet slavish fears, desperation, and other sinful things consequent upon the knowledge of ourselves, are not the work of the Spirit, and therefore do not flow from him by any immediate impression of his upon the soul ; but they are the consequent of this sight and sense men have of the dreadfulfulness of their state, which the Spirit shews them, by fixing their eye on the glass of the law, and their thoughts upon their miserable condition. As when a wild beast is tied to a post, or shut in a den, the hand that fastens or shuts him in is not the cause of his snarling, and tossing, and beating himself against the wall ; this is a consequent of his own wild disposition, as being in such a state ; or, as the wrath of God, which kindles hell, and locks and scorches the damned in the perpetual prison, this as punishment and a physical evil belongs to God, and is his proper act, but not those blasphemies and curses which rise from the pain of the damned. If men in afflictions, which may be remedied, do curse God, Isa. viii. 21, much more will it be consequent upon an endless misery, where there is no hope of redress. It is impossible that a man under punishment, without the hopes of a pardon, and being wholly corrupt, should have good thoughts of a revenging God. Yet though

God *inflict what is just*, he doth not *excite what is evil* and unjust. So, though the Spirit makes impressions upon men, discovers the misery of their state, sets their sins in order before them, by the awakening of conscience, and by his motion fixeth their minds on the consideration of them ; yet those sinful fears, accusations of God, charges against God, are not the effect of the Spirit in them, but the bubbling up of their own hearts naturally incident unto that state they are apprehensive of. And now to proceed unto that

Third question. How doth the Spirit work this conviction ? The great instrument whereby the work is wrought, is the law ; he acts in such a method in conviction as a Spirit of bondage, as he doth in assurance as a Spirit of adoption. As he is a Spirit of adoption, the gospel is the instrument whereby he works assurance ; as he is a Spirit of bondage, the law is the instrument, which is in a way of syllogism. When he comforts, it is in this manner : ' He that believeth shall be saved ; ' but the soul assumeth, But I believe, therefore I shall be saved. So it is in this of conviction, ' Every one that believeth not, shall perish ; ' the soul assumeth, But I believe not, therefore I shall perish. Every one that is unholy shall not see God ; I am unholy, saith the soul, therefore I shall not see God. The first proposition is the evidence of Scripture, the second is the evidence of conscience, the third is the evidence of reason in a rational deduction. It is as a solemn court of judicature : the first proposition consists of matter of law, He that believeth not shall perish, the assertion of God ; and, He that is unholy shall not see God ; this is matter of law, the assertion of God. The evidence as to matter of fact, is given in the second proposition, But I believe not, but I am unholy. The sentence is pronounced in the third, Therefore I shall perish, therefore I shall never see God. In the first, the soul is arraigned ; in the second, tried and cast ; in the third, condemned. The instruments then which the Spirit useth in convincing, are,

First, The law, which is the rule whereby to judge of the moral good or evil of actions ; and conviction is nothing else but the formal impression of sin by the law on the conscience, or the reviving that which was before imprinted ; the blowing off the dust from the letters of the law written in the soul. The

Second instrument the Spirit useth is the conscience, in the conviction of the fact. This tells the soul of its breaking the law, and contempt of the lawgiver ; flies in the face with a Thou art the man, and affects him as if the law had pronounced him by name accursed ; upon which account conscience is called a witness, Rom. ii. 15. And when this cometh and gives full evidence, the mouth is stopped, Rom. iii. 19, and the soul is said to die, Rom. vii. 9, is no more able to answer the accusations of the law, when applied by conscience, than a man deprived of life is able to answer a word at the bar, but remains as dead in law, under a sense of guilt. To assist conscience in this work, is the greatest work the Spirit hath to do, which otherwise would be silenced by men's lusts, or bribed to give in a false, weak, or slight witness, *ignoramus*, or mince the matter. As in the syllogism, whereby we come to assurance, it is the hardest matter to frame the second proposition, But I believe, but I love God ; the hardest matter to find out the truth of grace ; so it is the hardest matter in this way of conviction to find out sin, to be sensible of the guilt of sin. As many Christians do not own and find the truth of grace, by reason of their fears, and doubts, and darkness, so many a sinner will not own his sin, by reason of his self-love. Therefore the Spirit doth first work by the law, this is the breath of his lips, wherewith he slays the wicked, Isa. xi. 4, which hath a greater force in the hand of the Spirit, than the eloquence of the mightiest orator, and

makes men fall down under the power of it. As conversion is a knitting the heart and the gospel together, so conviction is a knitting the heart and the law. As the Spirit dwells in sons in a way of comfort, to make them call God Abba, Father; so he is in sinners, in a way of conviction, to make them regard God as a judge. As by the word men are forewarned from sin, so by the word men are reproved for sin. This is the Spirit's instrument, for God doth not in an ordinary way act immediately, but useth instruments in all his works; not that we say that the law is the cause of salvation (that is only by the gospel),—it is no more the cause of it, than the lancing of a wound, letting out the putrefied matter, is the cause of the cure,—but it discovers the depth of the wound, and that corrupt matter which, residing there, would hinder the cure, and fester, and end in putrefaction; or, as one saith, it is but as a fisherman beating the river, or troubling the water to drive the fish into the net. The Lord drives men into the net of the gospel, whereby they are caught for God. There are three acts of the law, justifying, directing, and convincing; the justifying act of the law is out of doors, and a condemning act stepped into the room, since men are 'concluded under sin,' Gal. iii. 21–23. Man in his first creation stood in an indifferency to the promises and comminations of the law, according as his carriage should be, but when sin came, the promise of the law was of no force, because the condition of obedience was not performed, whereupon man lay under the power of the curse. The directing power of the law remains, as a rule to guide us; for the work of Christ was to reduce us to obedience. The convincing power of it is of perpetual use, for the discovery of the depth of sin in the heart: Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from my secret faults.' Of perpetual use even to believers too, in regard of the contest with spiritual sins, even for the discovery of spiritual sins. There is a spiritual use of a spiritual law, to manifest those sins to a believer; in which respect it is not a terror to a believer, but a delight, because it discovers the enemies of God in the soul, and makes it run to the fountain of Christ's blood in the gospel for the cleansing of them; so that the more this revealing power of the law is used, the more occasion hath faith to manifest itself in recourse to the gospel promise. In these two latter respects the law is of constant and necessary use: the convictive is necessary to affect us with sin, and the insufficiency of our own righteousness; and the directive is not destroyed, but enforced by the gospel. We must know ourselves, and know God; the law giveth us a knowledge of God in his authority and holiness, and a knowledge of ourselves in our subordination and vileness. And,

First, The Spirit discovers sin by the law. It is the end of all laws to inform the understanding of what is to be done, and consequently of men's deviation from them: and so absolutely necessary the law is for this discovery, that the apostle owns all his knowledge of sin to come from thence: Rom. vii. 7, 'I had not known sin but by the law;' by this sin is revived: Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived;' as the moisture in wood is excited by the fire, wheezing out at the end, which was not discerned before. The rectitude of the rule discovers the crookedness of our nature; the perfection of the law, the degenerateness of the soul; the purity of the law, the pollution of the heart; the spirituality of the law, the carnality of our minds. The rule being altogether excellent, discovers a man altogether vile: Gal. iii. 19, 'The law was added because of transgression;' to discover the filth, stench, and venom of a man's heart and actions, and make him to lie under the condemnation of it, without any accusation of the righteousness of God. Hence it is said, that 'The law entered

that sin might abound,' Rom. v. 20; not to make it abound by encouraging the commission of it, but by impressing the conviction. A man before thinks himself a scanty and mole-hill sinner, but after the sight of the law, deep consideration, and the sense of it, he seeth himself a large and mountainous sinner, though he may appear small to the eye of man. And the Spirit discovers by the law the extent of sin; by the breadth of the law, the Spirit helps us to measure the latitude of sin. Naturally we think not sin to be so great as it is, but its dimensions are seen through the glass of the word, which shews it to be exceeding broad; as a star which a child thinks is but a little spark, is known and discerned by an instrument to be bigger than the globe of the earth. The Spirit shews the extent of the precept, and thereby measures the wideness of the sins; he discovers the purity of the precept, and thereby the filthiness of sin. And as he discovers sin, so,

Secondly, Secret and lurking sins he discovers by the law. The Spirit, by this dissecting knife, opens the entrails of the heart, to manifest the secret holes and traverses of this inward serpent; as when the body is opened, all the little strings within are plainly seen to the back-bone, τετραχλισμένα, everything in the whole composition of it lies open to public view, Heb. iv. 12, 13. It divides soul and spirit; it discovers what cattle litter in the affections and fancy. It doth unmask those spiritualised sins which harbour in the understanding and will; those lusts which appear abroad in the garb of virtues, as acts of gallantry and generosity; though they looked like stars of the firmament, it shews them to be but some unhappy vapours. The Spirit by the word opens both heart, and mind, and affections; the spiritual and sensitive part of the soul of man brings the conscience, as he did Ezekiel, from chamber to chamber, to see the vermin which crawl in every part; and as in dissection we see the valves and small fibres of the body, so the thoughts and intents of the heart, the secret aims wherein the spirit of wickedness lies, the counsels which gave the first birth unto sin, the close intents that had a fair outside, like a venomous serpent in a golden box, these the Spirit brings to light; it rifles the very corners, and sheweth the inwardest and the least things, and fetcheth up that mud which lay under a clear stream, which conscience was not acquainted with before. And this discovery of lurking sins is not from the innate power of the law,—that hath not a power of omniscience,—but by the Spirit working by that law. It is God that 'searcheth the heart,' Jer. xvii. 10. It is God's heart, like Elisha, in 2 Kings v. 26, that goes with every man when he doth this or that. The Spirit doth work by the law, in the discovery of sin, both as to the extent of it, and as to secret sins. So,

Thirdly, It discovers the wrath of God due to sin by the law. As the gospel is a glass reflecting the glory and love of God upon the heart, so the law is a pure glass reflecting the holiness and wrath of God upon the conscience. The gospel represents God upon a throne, with a sceptre of grace and righteousness; the law exhibits him upon a tribunal of justice, with a rod of iron and wrath. As the gospel is called the 'word of reconciliation,' so the law is the word of wrath; it shews a man lying under God's displeasure at the brink of the pit, and holds him quaking over the smoke of hell. As the gospel is the ministration of life, so the other is the ministration of death; it shews wrath entailed upon the least as well as the greatest iniquity, brandisheth and darts curses against the sinner. God is discovered in arms against the soul, going forth conquering and to conquer, with death and hell marching before him: Rom. ii. 8, 9, 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul that doth evil.' Sin is shewn in its filthiness, and wrath in its dreadfulness; sin, too, in its guilt. By the law we

discern our debts, and are assured they must be paid. The law lays hold of every sinner, like that servant in the Gospel, and, with a dreadful voice, claims the debt, 'Pay me that thou owest!' That is the first thing the Spirit works by the law as an instrument.

Secondly, The Spirit doth stir up the natural notions and acquired knowledge in the mind in this conviction. He lets loose those truths in the heart which were prisoners in the chains of unrighteousness, to be assistant in this work, as invaders put arms into the hands of those prisoners which had been under a force before. This work is the exciting and reflecting the light and knowledge in the understanding upon the conscience, whereby the creature feels the heat of the light, which in its direct beams he did not; nor doth knowledge swimming in the brain affect; he blows up the sparks of reason to a height, and, like the sun, draws forth the sap of those notions implanted in the heart, making them sprout up according as he first set them. For, as the sowing this seed was by the hand of the Spirit, so the improvement of these principles sown is, by the breath of the Spirit, in a way of common grace. He caused the birth, and he causes the growth too; that which he had sown he preserves and excites, so that when these notions are excited by the Spirit, men see double to what they did before discern of the secrets of wisdom and righteousness, and accordingly that there are more transgressions according to the law of nature than men usually dream of, which makes them justify God in the way of his judgments: Job. xi. 5, 6, 'Oh that God would speak and open his lips against thee, and that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.' It is an answer to Job's complaint, that his afflictions were without ground; which Zophar answers, that if the secrets of wisdom in the law of nature were excited, it would discover sin enough to justify God in his proceedings. The law of Moses was not in being in the time of Job, but in the original copy, the law of nature, and the common notions of mankind. The Spirit stirs up these in this conviction, and though the Spirit takes these, and works by the excitation of natural light, yet he brings in also another light, because the chief conviction he aims at is the corruption of the state, not only that of corrupt acts; the necessity of a mediator and a sense of spiritual sins, which cannot be wrought merely by that light which is naturally in the mind. It stirs up, therefore, principles already impressed, and introduceth principles not yet impressed, and binds both of them on the soul; for it convinceth by way of argument, and therefore its convictions must be founded on somewhat which the soul knew before, or arise from a new light attended with a greater evidence. Now, the Spirit of God doth not put out nature by the shining of grace, but improve, perfect, and regulate it, putting it into a right channel, making it to serve the ends of grace; so in this act of conviction, he maketh the natural knowledge subservient, and rouseth up that knowledge which lay rusty and useless. There is use of this, for God acts in a rational manner, that reason may be employed in this case; hence are his appeals to men (Isa. v. 3) of a depraved reason, 'O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.' Had reason no competency at all to judge of the unprofitableness and the bad return the vineyard had made to God, the appeal had been fruitless; but the appeal implies that even natural reason would have cast the verdict on God's side; so in conviction the Spirit doth stir up that natural light in the mind, and that acquired knowledge that it hath to be assistant in this work.

Thirdly, The Spirit doth irradiate and enlighten the mind and practical judgment. The Spirit brings a man to belief of the truth in the word by

clear and undeniable reason, and by rectifying and elevating the understanding. As he makes the characters written upon the heart legible, so he enlightens the dim mind, and snuffs the candle of the Lord, that they may be read, Prov. xx. 27, that thereby 'the inward parts of the belly' may be searched. In this regard he is called a Spirit of bondage; not that he brings us into bondage, but as he opens the curtain of sin and the blind eye to see the bondage sin hath brought it into. The truths of God in the word have an objective light, and the Spirit doth enlighten the mind, not by discovering new notions and giving new objects of knowledge only, but by creating a dogmatical faith and an assent unto those principles, and helping us to receive right and distinct notions of those things which are represented. And it is such a faith which the Spirit in this work doth create, which is not only apprehensive but quietative; it not only apprehends the things themselves, but the soul rests in them for truth, not that they are grounds of comfort in themselves, but doth clearly assent to them for truth, and own them, and fully assent unto them. There is a faith of assent common to men, but the Spirit quickens this faith in conviction that it hath a fuller prospect of these things which he doth discover, which were weakly and imperfectly assented to before; and the soul weighs these particulars which the Spirit sets before it more seriously than ever it did. This is a necessary work of the Spirit, for a stupefied judgment is a bar to any recovery; but when the light of the word and the light of the mind meet together, the issue is a full discovery of the notes in the soul and sink in the heart.

Fourthly, The Spirit excites and actuates the conscience, sets the conscience to smite, as David's heart smote him, upon the Spirit's touch by the ministry of Nathan. Most men know such and such actions to be sinful; they know unbelief to be a damning sin, God to be a righteous God, Christ the only Saviour, yet how few know these things convincingly, with an application of them to the conscience! How few have the descent from the speculative to the practical judgment, to be affected with them and with their own deplorable state! The Spirit, as it increaseth the light, it doth sharpen this faculty of conscience for self-reflection; direct beams are darted in to shew the object, and an edge is put upon the faculty to do its office. Light is shot in upon the understanding by the Spirit in the word, and fire is struck upon the conscience; suitable passions are raised in the heart by that light in the mind. As the Spirit of adoption giveth efficacy to the gospel, in affecting his soul with righteousness, so, as he is a Spirit of bondage, he giveth efficacy to the law to affect the conscience with guilt; he lets loose the natural activity of conscience, he arms it with a renewed commission, he opens the mouth of this herald of God, and makes it denounce dreadful things; he enlargeth it to take in the impressions of wrath, and transmit them to all parts of the man; he reviveth the guilt, and rouseth the conscience, the serpent in the bosom ariseth and hisseth, and conscience in man being awakened, lashes him. Thus sin being revived, and conscience awakened, they lay the soul flat and breathless. 'Sin revived, and I died.' Guilt is so strongly reflected, that a man doth not simply understand himself to be in a damnable state, but feels in himself the filthiness and misery of that state, and becometh a judge and witness against himself, acknowledging the righteousness of God, and the unrighteousness of his nature. Conscience, thus actuated by the Spirit, pleads sharply from the law against the soul (as a king's attorney doth against a prisoner at the bar), takes off all excuses, beats it off from all apologies made in its defence, and reproacheth him for it, Job xxvii. 6. It brings not only the substance of sin but the circumstances to mind, and what rebukes itself gave before to hinder the com-



mission, just as it will at the last day deliver those truths that were suppressed and clouded in unrighteousness, and usher them in as so many speaking witnesses; the memory is also revived to assist conscience in this work. Now, the Spirit only can excite conscience; though conscience hath a power to judge, yet it must have a light to judge by, and because it is sleepy and dull, it must be soundly roused; and therefore there is the same need that the Spirit should set conscience right, as any other faculty; because that is depraved, as well as the understanding is darkened and the will perverted.

Fifthly, The Spirit brings forgotten sins to mind, and presseth them upon the conscience. As the Samaritan woman concludes Christ to be the Messiah, because he 'told her all that ever she had done,' John iv. 29, so the renewing upon us the sense of all that ever we did, is an evidence of the Spirit's work. When old, forgotten sins are brought to light in the mind, it is an effect of God's Spirit, who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Thus the Spirit doth set in order youthful sins in old age, makes men to 'possess the sins of their youth,' as in Job; and gathers iniquities laid in the dust together, upon the beating the drum of conscience, and fills the soul with the sense and consideration of them, and brings in an old score of sin with many items. Item, such a time a contempt of God; such a time a speculative wickedness; such a time a quenching of the Spirit; profane speech; swarms of vain thoughts and vile lusts; the many aggravations of sin against mercies, in the very face of God, when a pardon was offered; rebellion against the light of conscience; stifling holy motions; breaking the bonds of love; the influence our sins had upon others; principles and root of sin; enmity to God; secret rising of heart against the purity of the law. Thus it brings sins that were forgotten, and sets them home: Ps. cxix. 59, 'I considered my ways.' He counted his ways and his sins one by one, as the word there signifies, as much as he could, and as the Spirit of God directed. Though many times the Spirit lays one sin closest, yet all the rest are brought in, and severally charged; as in a pestilent disease all the humours wherewith the body was troubled before run into that infectious disease; and the soul is made to read those sins as plainly as if they had been committed but the day before. A wicked man 'knoweth not whither he goeth,' 1 John ii. 11; he hath no clear knowledge of the nature of sin and the dreadfulfulness of wrath. But the Spirit in this work makes us not only see sin, but giveth an intuitive knowledge of it; draws the veil from the face of sin, washeth off its varnish, pulls away its fine dress and attire, and presents it as the greatest evil, and in its most Ethiopian deformity.

Sixthly, The Spirit fixeth the sense of the most terrible attributes of God upon the soul in this work. His justice, eternity, holiness, are brandished against him, and mercy seems standing aloof from him. He makes him look upon justice incensed, holiness disparaged, mercy slighted, power preparing a Tophet of wrath, and kindling it against it, and eternity perpetuating the punishment; and hides all considerations of God that might give hope of relief. Upon these perfections of God, which breathe terror against the sins of men, is conviction founded. Men naturally have a greater sense of God's mercy than any other attributes, because mercy and patience are more continually exposed to their view, in the warm sun, influences of heaven, fruitful showers, and kindly provisions, which multiply the notion of his mercy in the minds of men. And from those ideas, fortified by these common works of kindness, and from self-love in men's breasts, doth arise men's confidence and presumption in the mercy of God. And therefore the soul is never soundly convinced of its own natural state till self-love be shaken, and the other attributes of God seriously pondered and owned. When the soul is in a dead sleep, there

is no consideration of justice; and when awakened by the law, without the sight of the gospel, and a discovery of his mercy in Christ, like Adam and Eve the soul runs from God's presence, and every voice of God is terrible; and finding himself culpable, and seeing nothing but a sea of sin, he fears the justice of God, that the sovereign Judge of all the world will bring him to a speedy account, and inflict that death that he knows himself worthy of. Now, the consideration of these attributes have in the holiest men always caused in them reflections on their iniquities. Hence holy men in Scripture, upon some apparition of God, or an angel, were full of apprehensions of God's holiness and their own impurity, which possessed them with expectations of death, when they looked upon God as a consuming fire, and themselves as dry stubble, Ezek. iii. 6, Judges xiii. 22, Isa. vi. 6.

Seventhly, The Spirit of God removes, in this work of conviction, all the former supports which the soul leaned upon. It blows up all the little castles of defence, puffs them away as chaff, makes conscience work through all the plasters laid on to assuage the grief, lays the soul naked without any covering. The heart of man being stuffed with self-love, frames a multitude of miserable comforters as weak as Adam's fig-leaves; but when the Spirit ariseth in the ministry of the law, he tears all those coverings, nonplusses all those subtle evasions, breaks all those props and crutches in pieces, and casts down the soul before the foot of God's righteous judgment, that it dares not cast a glance, a loving look, towards that Sodom which God hath fired; knocks off the hands from all those things whereby men would compound with God and their guilty consciences; all the strong reasonings for the life of their lusts, and the presumptuous arguings for the salvation of their souls, fall before the battery of the word, which like an engine plays against the high-built and pleasant imaginations. He pulls up the foundation of their own righteousness, strips it of its painted garment, and makes them look upon their pretended beauties as loathsome deformities. When sin revives by the commandment, the sinner dies in the former opinion he had of himself; the sentence of death in himself is attended with death in all his comforts. And upon this account afflictions are mighty helpful to this work, when the Spirit sets in with them. When the supports of sin are drawn away, the evil of sin is more seen, which was not observed by men in the midst of their wealth and pleasure. When he 'holds them in afflictions,' then 'he shews them their work and their transgression, wherein they have exceeded; he openeth their ear also to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity,' Job xxxvi. 8-10. On this account God takes afflictions as the proper season to carry on this convincing work. For the rod puts life into the word, and makes men look inward to their consciences, and outward to their actions. When their former supports are pulled down about their ears, and conscience is quickened by the Spirit, then is the time for it to shew its commission; whereas in the hurry of pleasures it was wholly silent. And while the Spirit doth arm conscience against a man, he doth suspend the force and fury of his lusts, which before stopped the mouth of it.

Eighthly, The Spirit makes the soul intent upon the consideration of its sin, and those evidences which are brought in against it.

(1.) Upon the consideration of its sin. The thoughts of his sin haunt him like so many ghosts, and conscience, like Zipporah to Moses, flies in his face; not once, but with a repetition, 'A bloody husband hast thou been unto me.' It gives no respite, every thought is a particular sting; wherever he looks, sin stares upon him; and wherever he is or moves, conscience is with him, thundering in his ears the curses of the law, and flashing in his face the fire of hell, and presenting the black scroll to his consideration.

His sin is ever before him, which Job calls, chap. xiii. 27, a putting his feet in the stocks. He cannot move but he feels the smart of his wounds at every motion. The Spirit 'seals instruction;' he sets such a brand upon the conscience, that all the art of men cannot raze it out; it is held in by the law, Rom. vii. 6, and 'filled with bitterness,' Job ix. 18. The Spirit stakes him down, and points him to his sins. Lo, these are thy sins, and these will be thy plagues without a conversion. He will not let him take one sweet draught, nor a mouthful of cool air; he fixeth his eyes upon sin with sorrow, as much as his eyes were before upon it with joy. The soul had heard a thousand times of its lying, swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, and other wickednesses; the necessity of conversion, the misery of hell, and the pleasures of heaven; but all were vanishing sounds, till the Spirit sounds the trumpet of the law, and fixeth truths upon the conscience, and maketh reason perform its office; then he 'holds the eyes waking,' Ps. lxxvii. 4, and the soul cannot speak of anything but its trouble. For as the Spirit brings to remembrance the promises of Christ, and fixeth them as a ground of faith, brings to remembrance the precepts of Christ, and setteth them upon the soul as a ground of obedience, so, as a Spirit of bondage, he brings the threatenings of the law, and leaves the stamp of them upon us, that we cannot look off from them; inlays the law in the heart as a law of death, as in conversion and faith it is engraven as a law of life. Thus Christ dealt with Paul; Acts ix. 4, tells him of his persecuting, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' When Paul would know who it was who spoke to him: ver. 5, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth;' yet holds his eyes still upon his sin, 'Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.' These considerations break in like a deluge on the soul, so that none can stop them, and they attend the person at his bed, and table, and shop, and walk, and they incorporate themselves with him. And the Spirit

(2.) Doth follow the soul with one word after another, and presseth and urgeth more and more that which may make a thorough conviction. The word to natural men is like a flash of lightning, that scareth and vanisheth; it is like an arrow shot against a brazen wall, that immediately falls down again; it is a glass wherein a man seeth his face, and quickly forgets his own physiognomy. But the Spirit in this work holds the glass before the face, presseth upon the soul the pure interpretation, the sense and meaning of the law, drives it deep, like a nail that cannot be pulled out, doth many times providentially guide a man to those places of Scripture that sharpen the conviction, and rend the soul wider, as a torn garment is by every nail that catches hold of it; and never leaves it till he brings it to subscribe, I am the man whose name is written here, I am the man who is meant in this curse. But then,

Ninthly, The Spirit springs up fears in the soul at the consideration of this state. Fears, so far as they are not sinful, are the work of the Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage; he concludes it under a state of unbelief, makes it understand the intolerableness and duration of its misery in that state, puts the question to it, whether it can dwell with everlasting burnings? The Spirit presents it with a pure law, a righteous judge, and a deserved wrath. Now it is natural for any man under the just sentence of the law for a capital crime, to be full of dread. There is fire and thunder in the particular application of the law, as there was in the first delivery of it on mount Sinai; and since the transgression of the law, there is nothing but death, horror, and the curses of it, ready to seize upon the soul. It may well set the holiest men, when they examine themselves by it, on trembling, as Moses did at the delivery of it, Heb. xii. 21. And indeed it is impossible for the

Spirit to act, in an ordinary way, but according to the nature of that word which is presented to the mind. If a promise be applied, the proper consequent of that is comfort; if a threatening be impressed upon the mind, the proper consequent of that is terror; if a precept, the immediate operation of that is obedience. Therefore the Spirit can be no other but a spirit of bondage, exciting troubles in the soul, as it works by the law, because there is no promise of reward in that, but to those that perfectly obey. If the law met with a pure heart, free from all taint of sin, the Spirit would engender comfort by it; but since there are deep spots in the hearts and natures of all men, God by the law only persuades them of the truth of that; and it is impossible that from the law alone anything should arise but what is slavish. If the Spirit speak no other word but the law, it can produce nothing but terror and condemnation. What terrors must then seize upon the spirits of men, and what distresses be rooted in their souls, when they consider themselves cut off from all hopes of mercy by the law, having broken it, and no promise giving any ground of comfort, but a curse pronounced by the violation of it? And how severe that is you may see: Gal. iii. 10, 'Curseth is every one that continueth not in every thing to do it.' Now when a man seeth he hath no title to heaven in regard of the curse, no disposition to heaven in regard of his nature, and that the curse of the law is his right before the legal bar, and beholds the sparklings of wrath, without any cloud to shelter him, can a man see this without self-condemning, and a crying out, 'I am undone, I am undone'? When conscience is thus awakened, sin thus presented, the law thus manifested, and the soul held down to the consideration of all, it is as impossible it can be without inward convulsions, as the ground without earthquakes which hath air in its bowels without any vent. This thunder from Sinai raiseth nothing else but blackness, and darkness, and storms in the region of the soul.

Lastly, The Spirit, in a saving conviction, brings the soul after this wounding to a self-debasing and humiliation. Man is the most backward in the world to the charging guilt upon himself, he is more skilful at self-excuses than self-indictments; but the Spirit brings the soul to comply with the end of the ministration of the law, which is, 'that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,' Rom. iii. 19. By this revelation of the secrets of the heart, and the urgency of conscience, the overpowering work of the Spirit, the soul makes a positive conclusion against itself to the glory of God, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Thus by sharpening his arrows in the hearts of his enemies, Ps. xlv. 5, he makes his enemies fall under him, in an acknowledgment of his righteousness and power, and the unlikeness of their hearts to the purity of the law; not extenuating the guilt, but loading themselves with it to a self-abhorrence; abhorring themselves in dust and ashes, counting themselves as dead dogs, to violate so holy, righteous, just, and good a law; and turning all their self-righteousness to shame, heartily wishing those sins which gall them had never been committed. And after this, when the gospel is presented, the soul enters into debates with itself, and makes a judicious comparison between the first covenant, and condemnation by that, and the second covenant, and life by that. Here are flames of wrath, and there are rivers of joy; here is a lake that burns, there is a paradise that refresheth; here is a flying roll, full of curses, which will seize upon me, there is a rich gospel, full of blessings, that is offered to me; here is death to sinners that will not have God to reign over them, there is life to believers that submit with the obedience of faith. If I sin while I live, I must perish when I die; I must be saved by grace, or be punished by wrath. And shall I sin away my hopes, to fall into a miserable eternity?

shall I sin myself to death, when the promise of grace is freely made to me in order to my salvation? Thus the soul is brought to a sense of sin by the law, and the insufficiency of the creature, and then welcome Christ, and gospel, and covenant, and promises of grace; welcome the yoke of Christ. And when it cometh to this, then conviction ends, hath its perfect work, concluding in a thorough conversion and acceptance of Christ.

IV. The fourth thing; what sins, or what in sin the Spirit doth chiefly convince of! The conviction by any other cause is partial, it is but half baked, roast on one side, and raw on the other; the Spirit's conviction is universal, he holds a right rule to the crooked heart; he measures all the dimensions of the soul, and of sin in it, considers root and branch, leaves and fruit. As the Spirit in a good man mortifies all sin, cleanses from all sin, so in this work he discovers all sin.

First, The Spirit usually singles out some one sin at the first to set home upon the soul; sometimes some base unworthy action, some blasphemous word, some disparaging thought of God, some captain and master sin, which is first brought out to face the soul, and presented in its hideous shape: as crucifying the Saviour of the world was charged by Peter upon the Jews, Acts ii.; fornication upon the woman of Samaria, by Christ, John iv. 18. As the Spirit of adoption, in working assurance, evidenceth to the soul some one particular grace which is wrought in the soul, whereby he may be able to judge of his state; so, as a Spirit of bondage, he presseth some particular sin at first, whereby a man may judge of his deplorable condition. Some one sin the Spirit takes hold of, to begin this work of conviction. But though one sin chiefly sticks in the conscience at first, yet in the Spirit's work all others do rush in afterwards to have their share. When one bee cometh forth and stings one that hath disturbed the hive, the rest come out to revenge the quarrel; or when one mastiff sets upon a passenger, all the rest will come barking in. The guilt of one sin is let loose upon the conscience; not that the work ends here (for then the soul might be lost), but this is an introduction. Judas's thought dwelt only upon one sin, Mat. xxvii. 4, betraying innocent blood, that did affect him; but he never searched further into the kennel, never into the depravation of his nature. But the Spirit begins at one, and leads the soul from chamber to chamber, from lust to lust, till it hath viewed the whole den by degrees; for he doth not shew all at once, that the soul for whom he hath kind thoughts may not fail before him.

Secondly, The Spirit usually convinceth the soul first of gross sins. He begins with these, because they are more legible and obvious by natural light, which of itself condemns them, and sets the soul speechless. As in the siege of a town, batteries are planted against that part of it which is weakest. Sins in the conversation are more visible than those that lie secret in the heart, other sins are obscured by these outward ones, as stars are by a bigger light, and a little spot by a greater stain; these are more visible to the inward senses, and more easily read by conscience, by principles of reason which rise up in accusation of them. David's murder and adultery first affected his conscience by Nathan's ministry, but in the progress he complains of his hypocrisy, Ps. li. 10; of those sins which poured in their streams to the increasing that river, those auxiliaries which had contributed their assistance to maintain his heart in its hardness for that sin. As in thankfulness one great mercy appears, but when that is dissected, the whole train of mercies appear; so in conviction, one gross sin first shews itself, and when this is discerned, the whole litter comes in view. Christ

rouseth Paul for his persecution first, but after, if spread further on his conscience; for he acknowledges himself not only a persecutor, but a blasphemous and injurious. The Spirit holds the conscience to the visible letter of the law before he applies the invisible spirit of it to the heart, and affects the heart with that which is biggest, because of its nearness, rather than others, which, though as bad or worse, seem less by reason of their remoteness.

Thirdly, The Spirit from thence proceedeth to the conviction of the bosom sin. All men worship some golden calf, set up by education, custom, natural inclination, or the like; and while a Delilah lies in the bosom and engrosseth the affections, the soul cannot be set with its love upon God; and if the heart be disaffected to this, the others are more easily hated. When a general is taken, the army runs. This is the great stream, others but rivulets which bring supply. The disaffecting the soul to this, facilitates the remaining work, because this is the strongest chain wherein the devil holds a man, the main fort. The Spirit fights against the lighter parties that come forth, but chiefly against that which hath been the great commander of all the other forces against God, and the greatest confidence of the devil. As a wise general directs his force against the stoutest body, wherein the strength of the enemy consists, when that is worsted, the arms presently fall out of the hands of the rest. Other sins are as the stragglers of an army, by the routing of which the victory is not obtained, but by the shattering the main body. The Spirit doth chiefly convince of this bosom sin. Violence was the soldiers', extortion was the publicans' sin, and the Spirit directs John Baptist against these; hypocrisy was the darling iniquity of the pharisees, Christ plants his battery most against this; Paul, in his whole progress after conversion, abhors most his persecution. As sanctification is a cleansing a man from his iniquity, so is a conviction of the Spirit, a discovering to a man his proper iniquity, Ps. xviii. 21.

Fourthly, Thence the Spirit directs the soul to a sight of its corruption by nature, opens the root of bitterness, makes us smell the sink of sin, discovers the dunghill whence all these little serpents derived their life and strength, shews us the rotten core as well as the worm-eaten skin; that the nature of the person lies in wickedness, as a mole in the earth, or a carcase in putrefaction, 1 John v. 19, all under sin, no good spring in the heart; that there is poison in the heart, that taints every work of the hand, imagination, fancy, thoughts of the mind, and motions of the will. He brings a man from the chamber of outward to the closet of inward sins, until he arriveth to the large room of nature; bids him see if he can find out one clean corner in the heart, and so conducts him to the first sin of Adam, makes him behold the first fountain whence all issued, and all little enough to make the proud heart stoop to God. He makes him consider he is deeply concerned in that first sin, though so many revolutions of years have passed. This makes a man vile in his own eyes, that he cannot look upon himself, but with confusion and an universal blush. God looks to this sin of nature as the ground of punishment: Gen. vi. 5, 6, 'The imagination of the heart was only evil,' and therefore it repented God that he made man on the earth; therefore the Spirit doth affect most with this in conviction. As Christ came to cure the wound of nature, so the Spirit shews the impurity of nature in order to that cure; he would not else act upon the foundation Christ had laid. He is sent to convince men of their need of Christ, therefore of that which lays men under the greatest necessity of Christ, which is the violation of the first covenant, and the evil consequents of it.

As the Spirit in mortification strikes to the root of sin, so in conviction he digs to it; as in sanctification he cleanses from the sink of sin, so in conviction he shews it. Christ, in his discourse with Nicodemus, lays this open to him, who thought the doctrine of the necessity of regeneration a strange kind of discourse, and must needs think so, until he understood, John iii. 6, that 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' that nature was universally depraved. David begins with a sense of his adultery in his conviction, but traceth up his sin to the spring, his natural conception, Ps. li. 5. He followeth the young cubs to the old one's den, where he found sin's mark upon every member at his first formation. If the Spirit did not convince of this, he did little or nothing to the purpose; for as long as we think there is any good in us, we shall depend upon it, and never go to Christ. But when we see the running issue of nature, as well as the outflowings of nature, then we shall with open arms fly to him. To be ignorant of this, and complain of other sins, is a sign of conscience but half awakened. This is the proper work of the Spirit, and it cannot be done without this; the branches and fruit are visible, so are the beams and rafters of a house, but the root and foundation lies under ground. The Spirit shews this corruption of nature not by a glimmering but clear light; not only shews a man that he is fallen, but makes him see the heavens in their glory, from whence he fell; hell in its misery, to which he fell. He affects him with his nature, as the seminary of all sin, as a womb to prepare and ripen sin, until a suitable temptation is offered to give birth to it.

Fifthly, The Spirit convinceth of the evil nature of sin; and this is a necessary work of the Spirit. As in striving against it, the renewed soul quarrels with it as it is sin, so in a thorough conviction the Spirit doth unmask it as it is sin; he presents it under those considerations upon which the soul is to fight against it; he evidenceth it sensibly to be enmity to God, to his essence, attributes, his law, turning the back upon God with the greatest scorn, and lifting up the heel against him, Jer. xxxii. 33, endeavouring to despoil God of his government (whence sinners are said to be without God in the world), casting the holy law behind their backs, preferring a dirty creature before the Creator, a base lust before a blessed Jesus. He doth evidence every sin to be idolatry, an implicit adoration of Satan: ingratitude, because our mercies are received after our lives were forfeited; theft, in robbing God of that reverence that is due to him, and the revenues of his glory; unbelief, not believing his promises whereby he allures, nor his threatenings whereby he scares; unfaithfulness, in breach of covenant, and abundance more bound up in the womb of sin; this the Spirit doth convince a man is in the nature of sin, in every sin. Now, the Spirit shews sin to be an injury to a gracious God, impurity, disingenuity against a holy God, disloyalty to our supreme Lord, a breach of a holy and righteous law, a stab to the heart of Christ, a shedding the best blood that ever was, and such a heinous thing as is not to be remitted without the blood of God. As the Spirit's second conviction, of the righteousness of Christ, is as it is the expiating cause of the sin of man, so his first discovery of sin is, as it appears to be the occasion of the death of Christ. Without this conviction of the evil nature of sin, the Spirit is not like to attain its end; for there cannot be a conversion till a man be sensible of what sin is in its own nature, aversion from God, alienation and contrariety to him.

Sixthly, The Spirit doth convince of the filthiness and pollution of sin. Sin is the contagion of the soul, the universal stain of nature; nothing but pollution succeeded in the place of original purity. The Scripture doth set forth sin to us under all the vilest terms, calls it an Ethiopian blackness,

spots, mire, dirt, dung, plague, ulcer, sore. As there is a saltness in every drop of water in the sea, so there is a filthiness in every action of sin. The Spirit discovers the naughtiness of the heart, and the nastiness of lusts, being more loathsome than toads, and infectious than plagues: Isa. lvii. 20, the wicked man's heart is like the sea, 'casting up mire and dirt.' The Spirit in this work doth (as it were) spread dung in the face of the sinner, he shews what slime and frogs it hath left behind in every part it hath touched, that he may feel as well as see the loathsomeness of it. When the Spirit cometh thus as a judge into the soul, though we seem to be washed with snow-water, and our hands appear clean, yet we shall be as plunged in a ditch, that our own clothes will abhor us, Job ix. 30, 31. Then a man sees himself bemired from head to foot, like one over head and ears in a common sewer. By seeing original sin, we see the defilement of it, how it hath infected the whole nature; and that human nature is not like a river to purify itself, but its mud is increased rather than diminished. If the Spirit should stir up all the stench of sin, and unmask all its ugliness, without making any further progress, utter despair, fury, confusion, self-hatred, would be the effect of it. The Spirit in this work must needs discover this filthiness, if he attain his end in it. For as the soul in sanctification is to purge out sin by the strength of the Spirit, so it is necessary by conviction it should see the filth of that that is to be purged out, as an incentive to cleanse it. No soul will hate it, no soul will move its hand to its expulsion, till it be stripped of its painted colours, till it be shewn in its native blackness, till the serpent be stripped of his skin, and manifested in the venom and poison of its nature. Cain saw his sin in the wrathful effects, as it was not forgiven, but not in the polluting effect, as the blood of his brother had defiled his conscience. When we see the guilt, it terrifieth us; and the filth, it shameth us: the one makes us desire ease, the other cleansing. Without this sight we cannot justify God in his righteousness, nor admire him in his patience, that he did not long since fling such nasty vessels on the dunghill; without a sight of this we can never hate sin spiritually. Sensibleness of the wrath that is due to it may make us fear it, but it is sensibleness of the filthiness of it that must make us loathe it. Both these are the designs of the Holy Spirit in conviction, to make God appear admirable, desirable, and sin appear hateful. Then,

Seventhly, The Spirit convinceth of spiritual sins, and this is the great work. It convinces of the corruption of nature, the nature of sin, and the filth of sin; but it presseth most upon spiritual sins, the first motions, self-conceit of our own worth, pride against God, unbelief, and the like. Conscience hath a natural edge to wound a man for those sins which render a man inexcusable by the light of nature; but some sins lie remote out of sight, as spiritual wickedness in the high places of understanding, will, and affections, yea, and of conscience itself; a clearer light and a more piercing principle is requisite for the discovery of these. Drunkenness, murder, luxury, theft, &c., are sins condemned by the general consent of nature; the works of the visibly defiled flesh are manifest, but the works of refined flesh lie closer in the inward corner, and are not so easily discovered, though there is a greater defilement in these than men commonly imagine. Other sins disgrace us more in the eye of men, and these defile us more in the eye of God. The soul, which ought to be a living temple for God, is defiled by these sins, which is as if the throne of a prince should be besmeared with dung. That is worse in the eye of God, which consists in a conformity to the devil, God's great enemy, than that which consists in a conformity to the brutish creature, as sins of the flesh are. They are the strength of sin,



the heart and life of the body of death, the main fort, the other sins are but the outworks. The great end of the Spirit is to convince of these. The outworks must be first taken, therefore gross sins must be first known; yet there is no hopes of conquest while the main strength remains invisible. As sanctification begins at the sins of the flesh, but grows up to a cleansing from spiritual sins, so must a sense of sin in order to sanctification sail the same course. These being the subjects of the Spirit's sanctification, as that wherein the enemy's chief strength lies, are the subject of conviction too; and herein consists the spirituality of conviction. As the strength of an eye appears in discovering the spots in the sun, which lie covered with a rich robe of light, so the strength of conviction in the spirituality of it is discerned in the eye's discovering the stains in the heart, which are covered with a beautiful cloak of outward morality. When sciences are learned, the rudiments and more obvious principles are known before the mysteries are understood, and men grow up from a common to an abstruse knowledge; so the Spirit leads us from a sight and sense of more visible, till it dives at length to the secrets of sin, to the deceiverfulness of unrighteousness in the spiritual antichrist working in the soul. No spiritual conviction without a conviction of spiritual sins. A natural man may by natural conscience be convinced of great sins against the light of nature, as a dim eye can read a great print; but such are usually most sensible of sins against the second table, or more open sins against the first; but the Spirit convinceth of the more inward imperceptible sins, affects it with those against both tables. Paul was convinced not only of the sins he acted without, as his persecution, but of sins dwelling in him, springing up in him, and discovering themselves by their motions in him. And,

Eighthly, The Spirit convinceth the soul of its own impotency and weakness. He shews the sinner his filth and his chains; how lust brings guilt and slavery; how his understanding is deprived of true light, and his will of true liberty; whence there is an utter inability to make up the breach between God and the soul, from whence his best righteousness smells rank, and contracts a taint from that corruption which is derived from Adam unto the whole human nature. Men naturally glory in their own power, they think grace no more than walking according to the rules of blinded reason, they understand not the depth of their wound, nor their weakness by it. Sins of infirmity they think they have, which are to nature only like the scratch of a pin, not like the stab of a sword; they think their vitals are sound and strong still. But the Spirit convinceth the soul that her wings are broke, and her feet crippled, and her hands possessed with a dead palsy; that man hath an universal impotency, spiritual feebleness, his weakness as incurable as his wickedness, that he can no more strengthen himself than purge himself, Rom. vii. 15. The Spirit convinceth man that his best strength is but a shadow of righteousness, that as he was mutable in righteousness in innocency, so since the fall he is immutable to sin, and unable to turn from it; that he is a slave to his lusts, held in chains till they be knocked off, shut up in a prison that he cannot break, and under the power of a jailor that he cannot conquer. Without this he would think to lick himself whole, and never lie sighing and sobbing at the foot of Christ. Though a man naturally justify himself, yet when the Spirit deals with him, overturns all his props, and discovers him overgrown with feebleness as well as sinfulness, he cries, like Job, chap. ix. 20, 21, 'If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul; I would despise my life.'

Ninthly, He doth continually convince of the consequences and demerits

of sin. He doth dissect sin, and shew it in its circumstances, and he doth convince and set home upon the soul the demerit of sin; and (though he doth also propose the gospel) he sets home that wrath which is deserved by it. For he speaks a language quite contrary to that of the devil to our first parents, persuading Adam that no wrath would ensue upon it; that he should meet with life in eating the forbidden fruit. The Spirit's method is contrary to that of the devil; death is the wages of every iniquity. You shall be as gods, saith Satan; you have made yourselves like devils, saith the Spirit; are transformed into the devil's nature, fallen into the devil's condemnation. The Spirit sets home what it deserves at the hands of God; although he doth propose the gospel, yet he affects the soul with what sin hath deserved.

V. The fifth thing is, What the difference is between the convictions of the Spirit by this or that instrument, by nature, law, and gospel. What difference there is between the Spirit's setting sin before us in a way of conviction, and Satan's setting sin before us, who doth interest himself sometimes in this conviction of sin, when it is attended with much terror; what the difference is between the sense of sin barely from natural principles, and a sense of sin that is wrought by the Spirit; then what the difference is between a legal and an evangelical conviction.

1. Though there are some beams of candle-light in nature, which make a discovery of some unrighteousness, whence arise rebukes of conscience, yet nature is not able to furnish us with a full conviction, and such a one as is necessary for our repair. Blind nature cannot see the rubbish, much less remove it; depraved nature is not sensible of all its crookedness, much less can it rectify it: it cannot hew and prepare itself for the introduction of the image of God. The highest natural improvements of our natural faculties cannot guide us into the close dens and chambers of sin, and give us a true prospect of the poisonous entrails of it. Nature may spring up some good operations in the heart, take nature in its latitude, what a man may be in his natural state, before his conversion to Christ; nature as it is propped up by the mediation of Christ, and as there are some commendable relics left in it, there are still some inbred principles which bring forth many excellent things according to their proportion; as there is virtue in the earth since the curse of it after man's fall, to bring forth many excellent plants and medicinal herbs. But these convictions by nature are,

First, Light and uncertain, of a short duration; they are sudden qualms and fits upon some observation of outward judgments. As all judgments are sent to make men sensible there is a God in the earth, and that there are unrighteous actions that are displeasing to him, upon these judgments there are some reflections in a natural conscience, some sense of God, what is due to sin, and what deviations are from him; but they continue no longer than the cause that raised them; they are sudden frights and startings, which soon settle again, as in a sudden fright and start nature is speedily reduced to its former temper, and the blood that was put on the sudden into another motion is quickly brought to its former consistence. They are usually like a land-flood, which causes an inundation, but sink not into the roots of the soul: Ps. ix. 21, they are 'put in fear,' and while they are in fear, they 'know themselves to be but men.' It is a work not so much upon the judgment as upon the affections, therefore it is like a fire falling upon flax, and other combustible matter, which flames and expires, and you see its death almost as soon as it begins to live; whereas, those convictions that arise from the Spirit settle upon the judgment, and, like a fire in a log of wood, are kept alive in the soul, eat into the soul, dive into the bottom, produce

serious and lasting affections. Conscience is staggering and unfixed, therefore whatsoever ariseth from it, partaketh of the uncertain nature of the cause. We shall be moveable in our affections, unless first stedfast in our judgment; until then, there can be no abounding in the work of the Lord. The apostle makes one the cause of the other: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' First a stedfastness in judgment, and then a settlement in the affections, and then an abounding in practice. No conviction can fasten in a rolling and unballasted mind, no conviction that ariseth from nature. Besides, fear is an unwelcome passion, as love is a delightful one; nature is held longer in the chains of love than in the fetters of fear: the one it hugs and embraceth, the other it knocks off. The whole course of nature strives against flashes of fear, and will not endure the object of it; not invite and encourage its stay, but rather is up in arms against it; and, upon this account, those convictions that arise barely from natural principles, from anything of bare nature, are not of long duration. Any conviction from nature is like the smart of a prick of a pin in the flesh, which is soon forgot; a conviction by the Spirit is like the stab of a sword in the heart. The arrows of nature are easily plucked out, but God's arrows stick fast, Job vi. 4. Nature likes not to retain anything of God in its knowledge, Rom. i. 28; but the Spirit imprints things and holds them upon the soul, binds his corrosive to it, that it cannot shake it off.

Secondly, Convictions by nature do at best but stand at a stay; they are not growing. If the convictions by nature do remain, yet they are not growing convictions, they gather not strength and perfection every day; if they do not decay and fall, as a seeming star, into dust and rottenness, yet they rise not up into a stronger light, are not in a state of progress, but are stinted to low measures. If they do seem bigger, it is by an external addition from multiplied causes and renewed observation of judgments, not from any internal principle of an enlightened mind; but, in the conviction of the Spirit, the light yesterday was as the light of a torch, to-morrow as the moon, and still rising till it be as the sun, which discovers the filthiness and little motes of the heart, as the sun doth the filthiness as well as the beauty of the earth; and this light will increase sevenfold, as the light of seven days put into one: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' His path from his first stepping into anything that tends to it, is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day; whereas the way of the wicked is as darkness: a sudden gleam of light lighting upon him and vanishing, leaves his eye under more darkness than before. The Spirit makes a progress from the first step towards righteousness, till the dawning of the day of righteousness in the soul. As Christ came not only to give life, but to give it more abundantly, John x. 10, so the Spirit giveth not small flashes of light in the mind and conscience, but an abundant and growing light. Usually, convictions of nature do stand at a stay; nature will not row long against the stream, but at last be carried down by its force. Talents not improved are quickly lost, and plants, when they begin to wither, never cease till quite blasted, unless influenced afresh by the beams and showers of heaven.

Thirdly, Natural convictions arise from some external cause, spiritual from the word imprinted upon the soul. Natural convictions are, from some natural outward cause, only from the sight of judgments on others, or some personal afflictions on themselves; but the word is the sword of the Spirit, Ephes. vi. 17, whereby he cuts open the soul. By this he did execution upon those whose hands were red with the blood of Christ, Acts ii. This is always his instrument to cut, though he useth judgments and afflictions

as whetstones to sharpen the edge, or as a mallet to strike it in the deeper. David, a most intelligent person, well skilled in natural notions, was not convinced of his sin of murder and adultery by any immediate excitation of his natural principles, or those spiritual notions in his mind, without the instrumentality of the word in the mouth of Nathan; that man of understanding was not sensible of his sin, till Nathan came with a message from God, and upon this alarm the Spirit arms his memory, and conscience, and understanding, to carry on the work, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8. The filthy soul and the pure word are brought together when a spiritual conviction is wrought, and it discovers millions of loathsome lusts which the dim light of nature could never discern. That is the first thing; the difference between the convictions of nature and the Spirit.

2. There are also differences between legal and evangelical convictions. And,

First, In regard of the principles whence they proceed.

(1.) A legal conviction ariseth from a consideration of God's justice chiefly, an evangelical from a sense of God's goodness. A legally convinced person cries out, I have exasperated a power that is as the roaring of a lion, a justice that is as the voice of thunder; I have provoked one that is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, whose word can tear up the foundations of the world with as much ease as he established them. This is the legal conviction. But an evangelically convinced person cries, I have incensed a goodness that is like the dropping of the dew; I have offended a God that had the deportment of a friend, rather than that of a sovereign. I have incurred the anger of a judge, saith a legalist; I have abused the tenderness of a father, saith an evangelically convinced person. Oh my marble, my iron heart, against a patient, wooing God, a God of bowels! It makes every review of acts of kindness to be a sting in the conscience; it makes such a person miserable by mercy, and scorches him with the beams of goodness; turns the honey into a bitter pill, and useth a branch of the balsam tree as a rod wherewith to lash him. O wretch, to run from so sweet a fountain to rake in puddles! to rush into a river of brimstone, through a sea of goodness! What a cut is it, when ingenuity is awakened, to reject a natural goodness, much more an infinite goodness; to reject the goodness of a man, much more that of a God; the goodness of a friend never provoked, much more the goodness of a God that had been so highly incensed! There is a torture of hell in both, kindled by the breath of the Lord; in the one by the breath of his wrath, in the other by the breath of his goodness. One is inflamed by justice to a sense of rebellion, the other by goodness to a sense of his own vileness. This is that which was promised should be in gospel times, that in the latter days men should fear the Lord and his goodness, Hos. iii. 5. That is a true evangelical conviction, that springs from a thorough sense of God's goodness, when the goodness of God excites ingenuity, as well as the majesty of God strikes a terror.

(2.) A legal conviction springs from a sense of God's power, an evangelical from a sense of God's holiness. Power is the relief of a friend, and the terror of an enemy. Faith pitcheth upon the power of God for its establishment, and unbelief sinks under the sense of God's power with confusion; the believer stays himself upon the name of God, but the sinner languisheth under the consideration of the mightiness of that stroke that power can inflict. An evangelical convict dissolves under the sense of God's holiness, the other falls under the sense of God's power. I have offended majesty that can punish me, saith one; I have offended purity that would have sanctified me, saith the other. As the forgetfulness of God's power and

majesty is the cause of men's sins, we regard not how corrupt our practices and offerings to God are, when we consider him not as a great king and dreadful Lord, Mal. i. 14. As the forgetfulness of this is the cause of sin, so the remembrance of his greatness is the cause of man's reflection ; but a beam of God's holiness shining upon the understanding makes a soul more sensible of its dross than all the flames of wrath. The angels solemnly applauding of God's holiness, which they cried up in Isaiah's hearing, Isa. vi. 3, 5 ;—one cried to another, ' Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,'—cast him down in a sense of his vileness. Then said I, ' Woe is me ! because I am a man of unclean lips.' The sight of their covering their pure faces with their wings made him abhor, and cry out of the uncleanness of his soul. He saw the sun in its purity, and himself in his darkness and filthiness. A conviction by wrath is like a fire which only scorseth ; a conviction by holiness is like that of the sun, which burns by its heat, and discovers atoms by its light. The one measures his loathsomeness by the judgment of men, the other his filthiness by the holiness of God. Was I made for God ? did not his holy as well as his powerful finger frame me ? and am I so base as to wallow in corruption ? But,

(3.) Legal conviction ariseth only from a sense of the omniscience of God, but an evangelical ariseth from a sense of the disaffection of God to sin. The cause why men sin is the unbelief of God's omniscience, and the cause why they are troubled is a sense of this attribute, and not of God's hatred of their sins. The first impression from the edge of the word is, ' that all things are naked and open before him with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 13 ; and that sins, even secret sins, are set in the light of his countenance, Ps. xc. 8. Men will forbear their actions of folly when they think the eye of a grave man beholds them, but are bold to commit them when his back is turned. If a prince be unknown behind the hangings, when subjects speak treason, they will be afraid when they discover he hath overheard them ; not because they spoke it, but because he heard it ; they consider it as the object of his knowledge, and the mark of his vengeance. A legalist considers God only as privy to his iniquity, the other as he is disaffected to it ; he would never be troubled for his sin, if it never came under God's notice ; the other sinks under it, because it is the object of God's displeasure. The one shakes, because he is convinced God observes it ; the other trembles, because he is sensible God disapproves it.

(4.) A legal conviction is a sense of sin in the death of the soul, an evangelical is a sense of sin arising from the death of Christ. One person seeth sin in the misery of his soul, and the other in the cross of the Redeemer. The moral law condemns sin, and the practice of the ceremonial acknowledged that condemnation. The offerer saw himself in those sacrifices which died for him, guilty of death ; hence in the renewing of them there was a remembrance of sin, Heb. x. 3, and the killing of them was a bond or handwriting, whereby they confessed themselves obnoxious to the curse, and debtors to punishment, Col. ii. 14. This was only a sight of sin in the death of a beast, though it typified the death of Christ. An evangelical conviction seeth sin in the sighs and groans, cries and agonies, suffering and blood of the Son of God, an only Son, an innocent Son, unspotted as to any inherency of sin in his person, only submitting to the imputation of sin to him, and infliction of punishment upon him, even to a commotion of soul and body. This giveth a clearer evidence of the demerit of sin to a full conviction, than the whole latitude of threatenings, or the roarings the damned utter, or the destroying millions of angels and men. This giveth ground for a full sense of the inviolable sanction of the law, the reasonable severity of

justice against us, and the unavoidable demerit of sin, more than thousands of sacrifices could discover to the Jews. The voice of Christ's blood discovers more the malignity of sin than all men or angels are able to express. In this glass doth the Spirit shew it, to convince the soul in an evangelical manner. One seeth sin in the handwriting of ordinances against him, and the other sees it more meltingly in the tearing and cancelling this bond and bill by Christ upon the cross. That is the first thing, they differ in the principles whence this sense doth arise.

Secondly, They differ in regard of the object of the conviction, or matter they are convinced of.

(1.) A legal convict accounts his torture the greatest evil, an evangelical his sin. Both indeed are burdened, the one with his punishment, the other with his desert of it; one counts his torment hateful, the other his sin abominable. The first is troubled there is not a beam of mercy, but not troubled that he hath not a spark of grace. He groans under the presages of damnation, but not under the want of holiness; he is of the devil's temper, Why dost thou torment us? but doth not desire to be restrained from sin, but to be kept from torment; cries out as Lamech, Gen. iv. 23, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt'; not to God's dishonour, no complaint of that. It is true, he hath no pleasure in his sin, in the remembrance of it at the present, not for want of affection to it, but because it is embittered to him with the gall in his conscience; the law spits fire in his face, and makes his beloved object too hot for his holding; his allegiance to sin is not cast off, but at present only interrupted in the exercise. The other, the evangelically convinced man, cries out of his sin as the greatest burden, My God I have dishonoured, his Spirit I have grieved, his name I have slighted, and his mercy abused. And therefore the one, when his rack is laid aside, and the storm in his conscience blown over, falls as roundly to his former course as before; or if he abstains from that sin which was a cause of his smart, he opens his heart for more spiritual, and therefore more rooted iniquity, which breaks out into worse. Some think Ananias and Sapphira were in the number of those that had their hearts pricked at Peter's sermon, but their covetousness in a great measure remained in their affections, and ended in lying against the Holy Ghost. Such lay aside their apparel as players, to put on a disguise that suits the part they are to act, but strip themselves after, to put on their old garment again. Whereas the other, that is evangelically convinced, is more tender and careful to avoid the smallest slip as well as the grossest, not only when his conscience torments, but when the heat is allayed; careful to avoid sin in his duties, as well as in his more public conversation; he is afraid of the sting of sin, as well as of the sting of punishment; he judgeth sin his greatest evil, and next to that the want of God's favourable presence: 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord; how long wilt thou hide thy face, for ever?' Ps. xiii. 1. But then,

(2.) A legal convict is convinced of some sin, but he is also conceited that he hath some good. An evangelically convinced person is sensible he hath no good dwelling in his flesh; his conviction is more universal, the other's is more limited; a legal conviction lays a man but half dead, an evangelical lays him wholly dead; he hath no esteem of his sin, nor any of his righteousness. One is sensible of his sin, but not of his utter insufficiency to redeem his soul from everlasting death; the other sees fully what poor stuff his own righteousness is to make a saviour of. The Spirit, as it discovers the ugliness of sin, so it discovers the rottenness of that righteousness wherewith a man stilted himself up; it makes all seem as grass, and fading flowers, and

of no value. The other, like the prodigal, though he be sensible of his misery, yet he thinks to preserve himself by husks. A true convict seeth himself under the curse of the law, without ability in anything but Christ to take it off; he seeth a necessity to have Christ to deliver him, or he must be for ever bound; and Christ to raise him, or he is utterly lost; whereas the other thinks he is able to raise himself. The one thinks to repair himself out of the ruins of nature, and raise up a building of righteousness by materials of his own hewing; the other, like Job, abhors not only sin, but himself too, Job xlii. 6, and speaks not a word of that integrity he boasted of before. The one knows himself a debtor to the law, but thinks himself able to do something to content the creditor, and patch up his credit by promises of reformation; he lies down in sparks of his own kindling, wraps himself in a garment of his own weaving, thinks himself rich by conceits framed in his own mint, and fancies that he is able to silence the clamours of the law, and lick the wound of his conscience whole; as Saul thought to redeem his credit with God by the sacrifice of beasts, after he had offended in the case of Amalek: he makes self a God, and idolises his own power. This is a secret self-pride, that runs in the channel of the whole nature from Adam; and as sin is irritated by the law, so these thoughts start up by it, and make many that seemed to begin to be spiritually convinced, to end in the flesh. As sin revives by the law, so doth this pride rise up afterwards, and is the ruin of many. Hence arise those frequent excuses of men before they will come to a downright confession; whereas the other, that is evangelically convinced, is dead to his own righteousness, as well as his sin; he is sensible he hath no activity in himself, unless grace inspire him with a new principle. He performs duties, but doth not idolise them; puts forth his power to the utmost, but doth not rest in it; he seeth the emptiness of his righteousness, as well as the foulness of his sin; and thinks the one as unable to deliver him from the stroke of justice as the other to deserve it; and despairs of help and relief from the spring of nature. Paul, when a Jew, was of the same stamp with his brethren, thought to keep up his reputation with God by an external observation of the law, but when the law came in the hand of the Spirit, he died; saw not only his damnable condition, but the insecurity of his soul upon any legal foundation, and the rottenness of all his former services to bring him to heaven. Then all his natural and moral excellencies were as unvaluable as before they were amiable; they were loss in his sight. And to heighten his vile esteem of them, he adds dung, a dunghill righteousness, things of no account as to justification; yet none more holy than Paul, by a holiness derived from Christ by the Spirit after conversion, as none was more moral before by the strength of nature. Thus was he dead to the law, convinced of the vanity of any confidence in legal services; not that he might live to sin, but to God, by a new power derived from Christ, Gal. ii. 19, for he was supplied with sap from that crucified root. Now what was really the attainment of Paul, is so of every true convert, and is the desire of every evangelically convinced person. This conceit which the legalist hath of some good in himself, ariseth from the consideration of himself, compared with those that defile themselves more in sin. A sense of our own vileness, when truly convinced, ariseth from our consideration of the perfection of the law of God; for measuring ourselves with the holiness of God, we see nothing at all that bears proportion to him. Morality is but as the moon, which is glorious if compared with a candle, but faint if compared with the sun.

Thirdly, There are differences in regard of the carriage of the persons under each of these works of conviction.

(1.) Legally convinced persons snatch at comfort, though never so false ; an evangelical convict looks for comfort only from the mouth of God. The one doth not kindly own the supremacy of God, and therefore makes not full and close addresses to him for healing, but seeks for shelter from every hedge, like Saul in his melancholy to music, and in his distress to the witch of Endor ; like Pharaoh to his magicians, the charming pleasures of the world. He thinks, by thus being in a fool's paradise, by the pleasures of sin to choke the sense of conscience ; take a receipt from any unskilful hand rather than from the physician ; worldly mirth, carnal advice ; or at best he runs to sermons, and fasts in hopes of remedy, catches at any passage in a sermon to ease his soul. Sometimes he endeavours to stupefy his trouble by sinful diversion ; he moves hell for ease, and cries, Give me comfort, or I die ! Sometimes he snatches a promise wherein he is in no manner concerned, and claps it on by a misapprehension, and so charms his trouble for a time ; and in this he is assisted by the devil, who is skilful in this art, and so he makes a flower of paradise prove poison. Such wrest the Scripture to their own destruction, and to allay the storm is all they look for. Now, an evangelically convinced person, he longs for comfort from that Spirit which first impressed the sense of sin. As he was struck by the law, so he will be healed by the gospel only. He longs for joys, not of the world, but of God's salvation ; his eye is fixed with Heman's only upon the God of salvation, Ps. lxxxviii. 5. He will wait God's leisure, and take nothing but what the word offers ; examine well whether the word belongs to him. The Spirit makes him, like Christ, inquire into anything that is alleged, that he be not deluded by Satan's fair pretences ; he longs for healing by the Sun of righteousness, that he may come and scatter the darkness he sits in. All the good opinion of men concerning him cannot give him a grain of true contentment ; he is willing to do anything with the gaoler for the saving his soul—'Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?'—resolved to undergo the hardest conditions prescribed by the word of God ; but he knows all the true spring of comfort is the blood of Christ, the covenant of grace, the promises sealed by that blood, and a sound and substantial faith in them, and till milk spout from these breasts into his mouth he will not be contented ; he is for no other peace but that which is the fruit of God's lips ; whereas the other is satisfied with a slight answer, warms himself by his own sparks, drinks of any puddle, so he may but quench his inflamed bowels, and regards not faith in Christ. Such coolers make men go on more resolutely in the ways of death afterwards, since they can quickly have an allay for conscience when it begins to stir. These legally convinced persons snatch at comfort though never so false.

(2.) A legally convinced person would only be freed from the pain, an evangelically convinced person from the sin, the true cause of it. Like swine, they would not have the cudgel, but they would have the mire ; would have a freedom from the lash of the law, but hate to come under the yoke of Christ. They hate the iron that is come into their side, but not the crime, as a malefactor doth the gaol or a thief the gibbet. Such a one had rather have a rotten heart than a painful rack ; he had rather have a putrefied soul than a deep incision. The one cries for a plaster to ease his conscience, the other for an axe to be laid to the root of his sin. He would keep his right hand and eye, provided they would not fester. The other would not have any corner of his heart inhabited by any sin ; he is desirous it might lose its empire and dominion in the heart. He hath a respect to God's testimonies, though tremblings at the considerations of God : Ps. cxix. 119,

0, 'My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments ;'



the other, like the man possessed in the Gospel, would not have the devil tormented in him, and utters not a word to have the devil cast out of him, Luke viii. 28. He that is evangelically convinced looks forward to sin that may tempt him, and is watchful against the occasions of it; the other at best looks only backward to those already committed, and spends this disaffection he hath only on that for which he is racked; he singles out that to wreak his anger upon; he doth not fall on the troops of sin, not upon sin in general, but some particular sin which hath been painful to him; he hath no disaffection to the pleasure promised in other occasions, though he hath a distaste of the pain for that which is past. If the legalist be wrung into some reformation, it is with as much regret to part with his darling sin as David with Absalom, or Adam to be turned out of paradise. Though he forbears it, he doth not abhor it; if he abhors it, it is only the pain, not the sin; and the reason is, because there is no higher principle in such a person than fear and self-love, and to one or both of these all the reformation he hath owes its original. He is only afraid of hell, and could he enjoy sin without terror in his conscience or wrath in hell, he did not care if the glory of God were lost for him, whether ever he came at heaven or the presence of God, whether ever he had an hatred of evil or acted good; he distastes the evil only. But one that is evangelically convinced distastes the foulness of sin, relishes the excellency and beauty of holiness, because of its suitableness to its Creator. Where there is fear only, there is nothing but bondage and a legal frame. The voice of one legally convinced is, How shall I do this wickedness, and open the flood-gates of wrath? The voice of an evangelical convict is this, How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God, and spurn at his bowels?

Fourthly, There are differences in regard of the effects of these, and

(1.) A legal conviction doth not of itself soften, but rather harden; an evangelical is melting and submissive. The making a fleshy heart and disposing it to such a frame, is the incommunicable property of the covenant of grace, and was never within the verge and compass of the law. The law, like a cannon, thunders only bullets and cursing, not a word of a promise but to perfect righteousness; therefore a legal conviction cannot be attended with any melting fruit. It is like a hammer, that may break a stone in pieces, yet every part retains its hardness. After a mere legal conviction, the heart is commonly harder, as water; if it grow cold after it is heated, freezes harder than it would have done if it had retained its native cold, without the interruption of a contrary quality. All those strivings of the Spirit with the old world abated nothing of that evil figment, those evil imaginations, which lodged in the heart continually. And it is observed, that though the Israelites heard the thunder, saw the lightning, the mountain burning with fire, the blackness, darkness, and tempest, as a preparation for giving the law, which made them tremble, yet before forty days were over, they had not only forgotten that law, but they sin against that God whose power they feared, renounce God and his power over them, and make themselves a golden calf, *Exod. xxxii. 1, 4*. The scorching of the law makes the burned place more brawny after the fire is out. The understanding may be soundly convinced, yet the heart not melted; the one is from the undeniable evidence of truth, the other is from the kindly influence of the Spirit. But when the Spirit convinceth the heart in a spiritual method, it shines like the sun in the heavens, which thaws the cold and frozen earth, and makes a man to be as melting wax before God. Oh how immense is this love of God, that should offer me a Christ, provide a Redeemer, set him apart from all eternity for me that am self-condemned,

while I was a rebel, for me who am a firebrand of hell ! O inestimable mercy ! O melting goodness ! O free grace ! Then he calls to his heart, Down, rocky heart, down to the very dust ; lie as low as hell by abasement, since Christ hath made himself so low for thee ! This is always attended with humility ; such a person falls down on his face and worships God, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. and with submissiveness will bear the indignation of the Lord, Micah vii. 9. And therefore a renewed man, that is past these pikes, is more humble under a sense of his own vileness than all the legalists ever were ; for the Spirit keeps his foundation firm, which he first laid, whereon to build the superstructure of grace and comfort. As this sense of sin, the root, grows downward, so these noble fruits grow upward. The sense David had at his conviction for the blood of Uriah, made him startle at the numbering the people, and afraid of the water fetched from the well of Bethlehem, but he poured it out before the Lord, lest he should seem to countenance the shedding of any blood. Well, then, the legal conviction is as a brick in the kiln, burned and hardened ; the other like gold, inflamed and melted, separating itself from the dross.

(2.) A legal conviction of itself tends only to destruction, evangelical to health and salvation. The law presents nothing but condemnation and ruin, and can speak no other language ; its mouth is filled only with curses, without the mixture of any one blessing for degenerate man : what can be the issue of this, but confusion and endless torment ? Not the least drop of comfort streams from it. It is impossible but that when it chargeth home the violation of the law, and brandisheth all its curses, self-condemnation and despair must reign in the conscience ; and conscience, the deputy of God, when awakened, cannot but (like the Israelites) subscribe an *Amen* to every curse. The law, like mount Ebal, is barren of comfort ; blessing grows only upon the mount of the gospel. Hence, many under sharp terrors of the law have endeavoured to make away themselves, and leaped into the flames of hell to avoid the sparks. This of itself, like poison, works to the dissolution of the temperament of the body ; but evangelical is like physic, which, though it disturbs the humours, yet it tends to the preserving and rectifying the complexion of the body. And by this at last the soul is brought to such a frame that it is willing to lie under affliction and torment, yea, under the fury of devils, rather than sin against God ; for fear and ingenuity in the soul join hands to the keeping of God's commandments. The one discovers the disease, the other the remedy ; the one causes fear, the other hope ; the one shews the plague, the other discovers the plaster ; the one is like a dart in the side of a deer, that makes him run further from him that shot it, the other is as a chain to draw the soul nearer to God.

(3.) A difference in regard of duration. The legal conviction is like a convulsion fit of the earth, when it quakes and trembles, and affects all that feel it with amazement, but holds not long ere it return to its natural consistency and stability ; but an evangelical conviction lasts as long as we live, and is not cast off but with the mantle of the body ; then the sense of sin shall be left, and we wholly taken up with the praises of a Redeemer. Without this, grace would not grow and thrive to a due maturity.

3. Thirdly, As there is a difference between those convictions which rise from nature, and which rise from the law, so there is a difference between Satan's setting sin in order before us, and the manner of the Spirit's presenting it to us (for Satan doth sometimes set sin in order before the soul, and there is a difference between their methods). In convictions begun by the Spirit, Satan doth interest himself, and if he cannot stifle them, he endeavours to increase them. Though they are not in themselves acts of com-

fort, yet they are the act of a comforting Spirit, and in order to comfort ; but the devil impresseth them only as a terrifying spirit. God sometimes employs him as his officer after conversion for a correction of his people, as a beadle to discipline vagrants when they stray from their duty ; but there is a manifest difference between the impressions of guilt made by him, and those stamped by the Holy Ghost.

(1.) Satan sets sin in order as an accuser, the Spirit as a comforter. The tendency of a spiritual conviction is comfort, the intention of Satan is only to charge us with our fault. Satan, as an enemy, with violence brings his charge ; the Spirit, as a friend, with tenderness doth impress conviction upon the soul. Satan hath no mind to awaken the conscience, but would rather lull men asleep in a carnal and endless security as to this world, and not discover the danger until they feel the stroke ; he rather tempts to sin than accuseth for it, and sets men before the cannon of wrath, and giveth them no warning until they feel the bullet at their hearts, and are shattered in pieces by it. When he hath a full possession of the heart, all things are in quiet, and this great deceiver doth what he can to hinder true conviction ; and this great Pharaoh doth not double the burden until he is like to lose his prey, and is afraid the soul should be snatched out of his hands ; then he charges, as before he charmed. He chargeth violently, therefore his title is, 'The accuser of the brethren,' Rev. xii. 10. He is also diligent in it, for he doth accuse them day and night : he is no less an accuser, and a diligent accuser, of men to their own consciences. His accusations do not precede, but follow, the Spirit's conviction, to spoil the Spirit's work, and keep off the soul from coming under any other government than his own. Satan doth only accuse like a councillor at the bar, with violence doth implead the prisoner that he is counsel against, rakes up all crimes that can be found, presents them with the sharpest edge, blunts all his apologies made in his defence, giveth no direction to procure a pardon ; if the man look after any, he puts him out of hopes of obtaining. This Satan doth when he is afraid lest he should lose a man that he finds soundly convinced by the Spirit, and ready to go off from him, when other means are successless. He deals with such a soul as with Job : after God had granted him liberty to afflict him, he dispatched not one messenger with good news to him, but hastened one after another with tidings of his loss and misery. He doth rather over-accuse than under-accuse ; he is a lying spirit, and being envious too, that delights in the misery of others, he cares not what he saith to strengthen his charge. He would not speak truth to God when he accused Job, but makes a charge of hypocrisy, and a false prognostication of Job's cursing God, if he were stripped of his worldly riches, Job i. 11 and ii. 5. And he accuseth Job to his friends of more than he was guilty of ; this he doth to drive to despair. But the Spirit is a Spirit of truth ; he sets sins in order as they are, and is a Spirit of tenderness, convinceth the soul with a compassion to it. Satan deals with the soul as the thieves with the man in the Gospel, whom they left for half dead, but had no pity on his wounds. He acts quite contrary to Christ, and the Spirit of Christ in the world. When the Spirit is only a convincer, Satan will be a comforter, tells them sin shall do them no hurt, there is no cause of fear ; but when the Spirit's conviction operates kindly, and is like to be a preparation to Christ, when the Spirit begins to be a comforter, then Satan will be a convincer ; then his language is, Nothing will cure. Satan tormented men ; Christ, when he was on the earth, cured them. The Spirit, being Christ's deputy, acts as Christ did when he was here, and with the same affection as Christ did. Not but that the Spirit reproves sharply, as Christ did upon occasion Peter

and the Pharisees, and yet, upon compliance, was as gentle as before severe. The Spirit doth accuse for sin, but doth also shew a righteousness to answer those accusations, if it be embraced.

(2.) Satan presents God only as a Judge to punish. The Spirit in the progress of conviction represents him not only as a Judge, who hath the power of punishment, but as a Sovereign and Father in Christ, who hath the power of pardon. Satan presents God upon several occasions, either armed only with fury, or covered only with a robe of mercy ; one, when he would drive to despair, the other when he would settle the heart in presumption. To a soul convinced thoroughly of sin, which is upon the threshold of conversion, he represents God as the Lord of the world, calling him to account in the strictness of justice ; not as the reconciler of the world in Christ, not as standing with a pen dipped in the blood of Christ to cross out his debts upon his resignation to him. He tells the soul God is a God of terror, without a mite of mercy, never shews God in all his perfections ; but the Spirit, being 'the Spirit of truth,' John xvi. 13, discovers God in all his excellencies. Satan is the ruler of darkness : Eph. vi. 12, 'The ruler of the darkness of this world.' He discovers nothing but what may increase the darkness in man, like that in himself, that God is revengeful and false, not willing to make good any word of grace ; not only accuseth the soul to itself, but accuseth God to the soul, and chargeth God falsely. He represents God as armed with wrath ; the Spirit represents him as calmed by Christ. Satan tells the afflicted sinner only of an iron rod in God's hand ; the Spirit tells the sinner of a gracious sceptre ; Satan shews justice brandishing terror, and the Spirit goodness with melting bowels. Not but that the Spirit shews the justice of God in the law against sin, but it is to make way for the better welcome of the mercy of the gospel ; as Joseph carries himself like a judge, sends his brethren to prison, not to keep them languishing there, but to shew the affection of a brother, with the more comfort to them, and advantage to his own designs.

(3.) Satan conceals the remedy for sin by the mercy of God ; but the Spirit discovers it. The devil may aggravate the disease, but not tell us of the true medicine ; the devil discovers sin as an executioner, and nothing but the sin ; the Spirit, as a physician in order to a cure, discovers both the wound and the plaster, the disease and the remedy. Satan shews only fire to inflame, but he never acquaints the soul with the blood of Christ to quench that flame ; he is only a fiery serpent to sting, but never directs to the brazen serpent to cure that sting. Since he knoweth that all the strength and activity to cast off his yoke lieth in the knowledge of, and closing with, Christ, he useth all arts to keep us from the knowledge of the gospel, and the gracious condescension and good will of Christ, that we might not, by becoming Christ's subjects, cease to be his slaves ; therefore he uses all the power he hath, as 'the god of the world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4, to blind the eyes of men, that they may not see a spark of the light of the glorious gospel, which he doth by putting strange fancies into the hearts of men ; but the conviction of the Spirit is in order to the manifestation of the things of Christ. To the convinced soul, the devil shews only the curses of the law, but the Spirit shews the promises of the gospel. The devil is an envious spirit, and since he is thrown down from heaven, veils any light that comes from thence, that men may not look that way. The Spirit's conviction is in order to the manifestation of the things of Christ : 'He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.' Not but that the Spirit, many times, first shews justice with a drawn sword, and mercy with a veiled face, and doth not discover the promises for a while, and entertains the soul with this language : Look upon a doleful eternity, an

unavoidable wrath, consider the easiness of utter ruin, how life and endless misery hang upon a small thread, and a puff of God can send thee among the damned ; but this is but temporary, and to make the remedy more estimable ; but the devil is always for obscuring the gospel, and flashing the law in the face of the sinner.

(4.) When Satan cannot conceal the remedy, he endeavours to disparage it, to keep the soul under terrors and a sight of sin, in opposition to that remedy. But the Spirit convinceth of the foul evil of sin, and also magnifies the excellency of the remedy provided against it. Satan would make them believe the blood of Christ is too shallow to cover the mountains of their iniquities ; the Spirit wounds to raise an esteem of the depths of that blood. Since the devil cannot conquer Christ, he will endeavour to disparage Christ, and the merit and value of his blood ; the Spirit was sent to glorify Christ, which is contrary to the devil's designs, to disparage him : John xvi. 14, 'He shall glorify me.' As Satan would wholly hide the mercy of God, so when he cannot, but that it breaks out, he extenuates the grace of the covenant, fills men full of disputes and carnal reasonings against the riches of grace, and latitude of the promise. He sets up pride in the heart, as he did in Adam, against the grace of God ; it was his old trade to make men jealous of God : the same arts he doth exercise still, with more subtilty, as being assisted with a large stock of experience since the fall. Distrust of God was that he tempted Adam to, and Christ himself, putting the thing to an *If*, 'If thou art the Son of God.' Satan presseth upon them their sin, as unpardonable ; at first, to encourage security, he tells them sin is so small that justice will not regard it, and afterwards so great that mercy cannot forgive it, that they are past the limits of grace, that the candle of their lives will not burn long enough for a true repentance ; but the Spirit never acquaints the soul with any such news ; for this is against the nature of the gospel, this is to bely the terms and tenor of it, for he always proposeth the gospel in its true terms of faith and repentance. He shews sin in its ugly colours, as an object of justice, while it is cherished, and the sinner as an object of mercy in the gospel, when repenting. The Spirit presseth it as a duty to believe, Satan presseth it upon their consciences that they ought not to believe, that swine must not meddle with pearls, nor dogs with jewels, that to believe is to presume, that they provoke God in closing with mercy, before they have a fitness for it. Such things are the language of many under troubles, when Satan puts his finger into them, and by this means keeps men off in a sight of sin, from closing with the promise. If a promise appears, Satan darkens it ; if the soul cometh to close with it, Satan endeavours to beat off their fingers, and tells them they have not, nor are ever like to have, qualifications for the promise ; but the Spirit is sent on the same errand that Christ came on, to manifest the name of God, the freeness of his mercy, and that the gospel is as large in blessings to penitents and believers, as the law is in curses to impenitents and infidels, and clears up the things which are freely given us of God, gospel grace and favour, gospel promises. These are 'the things freely given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12. But if the soul, like Joshua, doth look towards the angel of the Lord, Satan will be at hand to turn away his eyes from him, Zech. iii. 1.

(5.) The devil always, in setting sin before the soul, endeavours to drive it to despair, the Spirit to encourage it to faith ; the one to sink it in despair of pardon, the other to excite it to a mourning for sin. Satan would drive it to blasphemy, like those, Rev. xvi. 11, that 'blasphemed the God of heaven by reason of their pains, and repented not of their deeds.' But the Spirit instructs with the conviction, teaching us to justify God, and condemn our-

selves, to quell our murmurings, and justify God's procedure, and make us submissive to God's righteous judgment. Satan discovers sin, to drive the soul to a worse sin than that which he hath discovered, and set the soul more at variance with God. Satan is an evil spirit, and is 'a roaring lion, going about to devour,' 1 Pet. v. 8. The Spirit seeks to support, and discovers sin, to make men humble before God, and to have good thoughts of God's tenderness. The language of the Spirit is, thy case is desperate in itself, but there is balm in Gilead, there is eye-salve. The language of the devil is, God hath forsaken thee, as to Saul, who thereupon slew himself on his own sword; as he spurred Judas to sin after self-conviction, so he hurried him as fast to the halter, thence to hell. Thus he endeavoured to engage Job in an open hostility against God, and spared no way to gall him, and move him to so cursed a rebellion. When such motions are found by any persons lying under a sense of sin, and wrath due to it, they may conclude them not to be any touches of the Holy Spirit, who, being a Spirit of holiness, can never stir up such sinful motions. Satan hath a great advantage to this end, to drive to despair, from the guilt of our consciences; and an advantage to accuse us, from the darkness and ignorance of our hearts, and unacquaintance with the largeness and extent of the gospel. He is also skilful in all the terrible threatenings of God in the word; he hath read them all over, and draws what darts out of that quiver he pleases to answer that end. He can open the fountain below, the spring of our sin, the window above, the streaming of justice, and cause a deluge of despair; and, being a perfect hater of God, he endeavours to imprint upon men the same disposition. Whereas, the Spirit being love, and acts of love principally ascribed to him, aims at the drawing the soul to such a frame of love, and opens our sin to make us despair in ourselves, and the treasures of the gospel, to make us run to God with open arms, shews the greatness of sin, and also the attainableness of mercy, upon our return and repentance. The Spirit being sent as a comforter, his principal intent is, not to terrify, but that he may lay more lasting and stronger foundations for comfort; and, being a wooer and solicitor for Christ, when he tells us of our misery by our match with sin, it is not like Satan, to make our union straiter, but to break it off, and bless us with a better; and therefore, when he shews the ugliness and misery of sin, it is to raise our esteem of Christ, and promote our acceptance of him.

(6.) Satan works violently and suddenly in this case, and most by the passions and humours of the body, rather than by reason; but the Spirit works upon the mind, therefore he is an enlightening Spirit. Satan works upon the reason by the passion, the Spirit upon the passion by the reason; he first enlightens the mind, and brings light into the heart, and the rational faculties, the proper subjects of light, and by this means winds up the passions to what pitch and tune he thinks fit. Satan first works upon the humours of the body, as melancholy, and the like. Satan works violently, as upon passion, as he buffeted Paul; boxes a man to and fro, so that he hath no time to do anything but consider his misery: whereas the Spirit proposeth the object, helps the soul to consider, and by degrees leads to a further knowledge of the light of the gospel, from a glimmering to a shining light, until the knowledge of the Lord break in in its full glory. The Spirit also is more particular in his convictions, as acting omnisciently, which Satan being a creature cannot do; who cannot discern all sins, but guesses at some thoughts and actions, and therefore his setting sin before men is more confused. The Spirit's setting sin before men is more particular and orderly; but in the whole, Satan acts as a convincer only, the Spirit as a convincer and comforter: one aims at terror and despair, the other at comfort and faith.

## VI. The application.

*Use 1. Of Information.* If the Spirit of Christ be the author of conviction of sin ; if this is the order God proceeds in, then,

First, The gospel doth not destroy reason and rational proceeding. It is agreeable to common reason, that old principles should be exploded, and appear unworthy, base, unreasonable, and weak, before new ones be introduced and entertained. The working of the Spirit is according to the nature of man, moves not in contradiction unto, but in an elevation of reason ; he explodeth principles, which were planted in the mind before, and discovers principles which reason cannot disown, though it did not before apprehend ; he doth not extinguish reason, the candle of the Lord, but snuffs it, and adds more light, reduces it to its proper manner of operation, and sets it in its right state towards God ; brings fresh light into the understanding, and new motions into the will. He doth not dethrone reason and judgment, but apply it to its proper work, repair it, sets it in its true motion ; as mending a watch is not to destroy it, but rectify that which is out of order, and restore it to its true end. Religion is not the destruction, but the restoration, of reason. The arguments the Spirit useth are suited to the reason of men, otherwise conscience could not be moved, for conscience follows judgment : it is not an act of judgment, but imagination, that reason doth not precede. As the service God requires is a rational service, so the method he uses in conversion is a rational method.

Secondly, We may from this doctrine see the excellency of the gospel state. The foundation of it is laid by the Son of God ; the application of it, and the preparations to that application, are wrought by the Spirit of God. The whole Trinity concern themselves in man's recovery : the Father contrives it, the Son lays the foundation of it in his blood, the Spirit prepareth the soul for the participation of it. The Father shews the evil of sin, by making his Son a sacrifice for it ; the Son acknowledgeth the demerit of sin, by consenting to his own expiatory death ; the Spirit bears witness against the evil of it, by discovering to us the filthiness of its nature, ' For when he is come,' ' the Comforter whom I will send,' John xv. 26, ' he shall testify of me,' saith Christ. The Spirit doth it as the fruit of Christ's purchase, and gift of Christ's royalty ; he breaks the rock, subdues the heart, fills it with the bitterness of sin, that it may taste of the sweetness of grace ; he shakes the rod of damnation over men, to make them fly to a golden sceptre held out to relieve them. The first covenant spake terror only, and spake no more comfort to men than devils, sealed them up to destruction, without one spark of light to shew the way of salvation ; but the Spirit in the gospel giveth us light to see our misery, but in order to our apprehension of the remedy ; he makes us know our state, that we may know our Saviour ; he fills men with trembling and amazement in a way of grace, for his service ; not in a way of judgment, as a preparation to their down-lying in eternal flames. God hath provided an agent to do that, which Christ by reason of his flesh was not so likely to do. The garb wherein Christ appeared offended the world ; it was incredible to man that God should send his Son in so mean a condition. From this the world drew pretences for their unbelief, but the glorious appearance of the Spirit cuts off all these pretences. Man can have no excuse from the convictions the Spirit makes. This seems to be part of the expediency of Christ's departure, that the Spirit might convince.

Thirdly, All convictions and convincing discourses must not be exploded as legal ; they are the work of the Spirit, as the royal gift of Christ, and the fruit of Christ's ascension ; nay, the first work of the Spirit as a comforter,

a fruit of the promise of the Spirit as carrying on the design of Christ. The convictions of the Spirit are no more legal, than the blood of Christ a legal blood, the priesthood of Christ a legal priesthood, the offices of Christ legal offices. The works of the Spirit, in what way soever, are evangelical in their end, since the foundation on which they are built is a gospel foundation.

Fourthly, We see the mighty power and excellency of the word in the hand of the Spirit. The Spirit is the author of conviction, not immediately, without the proposing any object, but in and by the word. The Spirit, like Christ to the woman of Samaria, discovers 'all that she had done,' John iv. 29. The word in this hand is a hammer to break the hardest rock, a fire to melt and devour the compactedest metals, a spirit to enter through the closest bars, a rod to smite the stoutest sinner, a breath to slay the highest wickedness. It makes men to assent to what they loathed, sets them on fire, though they use all their arts to quench it, Rev. xi. 10. It doth torment those that dwell on the earth, while they are in an earthly and carnal frame. The holiness of the word is evidenced, in shewing us the filthiness of our souls; the power of the word manifested, in pulling down that which exalts itself, though it be never so strong a hold; the divine authority is manifest, in revealing the secrets of the heart, though lying hid, not only from the eyes of the world, but also from the present knowledge of the soul itself, 1 Cor. xiv. 24. Like the sun, nothing is hid from the light and force thereof; it edgeth a man's conscience, sets him a-trembling, because it is the voice of the Lord. When the Spirit fastens it on the soul, it will make the highest mountain to shake, the heart of an incarnate devil to tremble; put such a cup of amazement in the hands of a sinner, that all the pleasures of sin shall not put the taste out of his; it will make a prince come down from a throne, let fall his sceptre; make David throw his crown from his head, and Ahab change his purple into sackcloth, and the jailer spring in trembling before his prisoners. Wonder not at this powerful effect, since the word is managed by the hand of the Spirit.

Fifthly, If the Spirit be the author of conviction, how weak then are all means of themselves, till the Spirit set them home upon the conscience! Could nature thoroughly convince, what need of the Spirit? Threatenings will not savingly affright, nor promises powerfully allure, without the power of the Holy Ghost to imprint them. A man may read them ten thousand times over, and have no full reflection upon himself, as concerned in them, without the operation of this mighty arm. All the Jewish sacrifices were too feeble to expiate sin without the death of Christ; all the powers in the world are too weak to convince of sin without the arm of the Spirit. How foolish is it for man to depend upon his own resolution, to think the sense of sin necessary, and yet put it off until another day, when this sense is not in his own power, but at the Spirit's pleasure, and there is as much need of the Spirit to touch us with a sense of sin, as of the angel's descent to move the waters, to the bestowing of health!

Sixthly, If the Spirit be the author of conviction, we may hereby judge of the motions of the Spirit, and distinguish them from motions from other causes. The Spirit never moves to sin, or anything that appears sinful. That Spirit which is to display sin in its black colours, in order to conviction, can never solicit to the embraces of it, in order to damnation; that Spirit which shews sin in its hellish shape, can never invite the soul to espouse deformity. He that is sent to convince of it, can never be so false to his office as to daub with it. Impure breathings are not the issues of a Spirit of holiness; injuries and falsities against God never take their rise from a Spirit of truth. Whatsoever therefore hath a tincture of sin, what-



soever is *per se* an occasion of sin, can never come from the Spirit of God, let what revelation soever be pretended; especially whatsoever disparageth Christ in his undertaking, in the glory of any of his offices, and the honour of God by him, this receives no encouragement at all from the Spirit, whose employment it is to reprove for unbelief, and whatsoever shelters itself under the wings of it. He is Christ's deputy, and will not infringe the main end of Christ, which was to set up holiness and pull down sin. The Spirit cannot move to anything that destroys the foundation of Christ's gospel.

Seventhly, If the Spirit be the author of the conviction of sin, we see then who is the great author of stifling convictions, and hindering them from coming to a good issue. It must be something contrary to the Spirit of God; who is that but Satan? It is a character of a child of the devil to be an 'enemy to all righteousness,' Acts xiii. 10; much more is the devil, the father of that child, an enemy to all righteousness. And thus said Paul to Elymas when he withstood the apostle, and endeavoured to divert Paulus Sergius from entertaining the word. The devil hath no such enemy in the heart of man as faith, because this brings the soul from under his power, to be subject to another head; he sets his strength against the plantation of it, and likewise against the preparation for it. His design is against righteousness and holiness. He first assaulted the righteousness of Adam's nature in paradise, and endeavours to prevent any restoration of righteousness to the soul, by keeping men off from the means of it, raising the spirit of persecution against it, instilling into men false imaginations of the unpleasantness of it, the pleasures of sin, and the easiness of a deathbed repentance, and stifling convictions, which are the first step to happiness. He finds corrupt principles in men, which he arms against the attempts of the Spirit. The Spirit first convinceth of sin, and then of righteousness. The devil goes quite contrary: first he endeavours to convince of a false righteousness, and, when that will not prevail, then he convinceth of sin. When he cannot prevent a sinner's seeing sin in its deformity, then he will endeavour to hinder him from seeing grace in its beauty and lustre. When the sinner is impenitent, he represents God as stripped of his justice, that he may not fear. When conscience is soundly stirred, he labours to render it fruitless, and stop the torrent of conviction; strips God of his mercy, that he may increase the man's fears; he tells him his former sins are swelled above mercy. He tells the bold sinner that he hath a righteousness, and that God hath no arrows in store for him; he tells the troubled sinner that he hath nothing but sin, and that God hath no bowels reserved for him. He always contradicts the method of the Spirit of God, and still is, what he was from the beginning, a liar; he endeavours to comfort when the Spirit troubles, and troubles when the Spirit comforts; he will speak peace when God cries guilt, and cries guilt when the Spirit cries peace; he is all for the gospel when the Spirit handles the law, and is all for law when the Spirit utters the gospel. Hence he hath his 'fiery darts,' that is, the fear of death and damnation by reason of sin and imperfect obedience, which he suggests to the conscience, Eph. vi. 16. Thus he walks contrary to the Spirit of God. You see then who is the author of stifling conviction.

Eighthly, If the Spirit of God be the author of conviction, how sinful is it then to resist the convictions of the Spirit! It is a new and worse rebellion added to all the former, more immediately against God, and offering violence to the Spirit, and in some degree a doing despite to the Spirit of grace, by whose influence convictions are made. It is something above a sin against mere knowledge, because it is against the present dictates of the Holy Ghost, a depriving him, as much as a man may, of a great part of his

office, and consequently of all, because he cannot be a comforter unless he be first a convincer. The Spirit shews a readiness for your cure, and it is a more than ordinary provocation to slight a physician when he stands ready with his medicines. It is a justification of ourselves in the face of God, and of all those sins we have committed, when we will not regard anything that God saith against them; it is to be the devil's second in his war against God and our souls.

II. If the Spirit of God be the author of conviction, it affords a use of comfort. It being the peculiar work of the Spirit, it is a mighty comfort to them that comply with the operations of the Spirit, listen to these convictions, and do admit them to take possession of the soul.

First, It is a matter of comfort that the Spirit should take upon him this office of curing us, that he will condescend to be a chirurgeon to so many putrefied souls, deals with them in the word, and employs his lance to let out the corrupt matter; that he will vouchsafe to bring the law and our consciences, the gospel and our hearts, together. The blessed Jesus submitted to be a sacrifice that he might be our righteousness; the Spirit undertakes to be our instructor that he might be our comforter, and stirs up the mud in our consciences that is so loathsome in itself. The Spirit might have stood aloof of, and left us and our sins to nuzzle together, without troubling himself about our state.

Secondly, The convictions of the Spirit will have a good issue, if they be not resisted. You need not fear a lance in the hands of love and tenderness. He is God's agent, Christ's deputy, to rescue you. He hews not those that submit to him for the fire, but for the building; he cuts that he may heal, burns that he may cure; he is only to open the passage into your hearts, to let in some of the blood from the pierced heart of Christ. As wars in the world go before the end of all things, so convictions and tumults in the soul are the presages of an approaching redemption. There is good hopes, since he is entered upon the first part of his work, the conviction of sin, that it will not be long ere he proceeds to the second, which is the conviction of righteousness. If the Spirit did not intend your good, he would never have pressed so hard upon you at any time, never given a heart to comply, but have left you blind in your sins till destruction had seized upon you, and hurried you to perpetual imprisonment. But though now you are prisoners it is a comfort, because you are prisoners of hope. The Spirit wounds, and wounded souls are the fittest objects for compassion. The sight of sin must precede the purging of it, and then the fruit of it is true consolation. Isa. lxvi. 1, God dwells 'with the humble and contrite spirit;' not *I will dwell*, but *I dwell*; I dwell there when I wound and bruise, but the end of my dwelling there is not principally to bruise, but 'to revive the spirit of the humble.' The Spirit is Christ's deputy, therefore doth nothing but pursuant to Christ's office, and that is, to turn a 'spirit of heaviness' into the 'garment of praise,' Isa. lxi. 1. He came 'to seek and save them that were lost,' to bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick, and deliver them from their destruction, Ezek. xxxiv. 12, 16, 'in a cloudy and dark day.' Such a temper was our Redeemer of when God entrusted him; such a temper is the Spirit of. Our Redeemer would not have sent one of a different nature from himself; the same nature is in all the three persons; they are one in nature, one in affection, one in design of the salvation of man. What though the troubles of any man may be grievous at present, and he may be like a hart hunted and standing at a bay, at a loss what course to take! It is no ground of discouragement. When our sins were set home upon our Redeemer, they put him to a stand: John xii. 27, 'What shall I say?' Yet the issue was

glorious to God and himself, and to poor souls. The Spirit will deal no otherwise with the members than God with the Head.

III. Use of exhortation. If the Spirit be the author of conviction, the First exhortation is to those who have been convinced by the Spirit.

(1.) Be thankful to God. It is a matter of praise that God hath driven you to him, though with sharp lashes, and a greater matter of praise if he drew you only with cords of love. That God should employ his Spirit to be his solicitor to sinners; that he left you not to find out the filthiness and danger of your state by your own blind eyes. You have had fairer draughts of his power and goodness. When you were under troubles, did you ever think the mountains would have been removed? did you ever think comfort would have dawned on you? Since any of you have received light, you see the blessed skill and power of the Spirit; you were 'brought low, and he helped you,' Ps. cxvi. 6; bless your strong deliverer; bless that skilful chirurgeon that cured though he lanced. When Peter was brought out of man's prison, he considered it with great astonishment; much more consideration is due when we are brought out of God's prison, Ps. xlii. 6. It was God's counsel in your reins, though sharp like the pain of the stone, bless him for it. He hath given you but a drop of hell, when he might have shot all his granadoes into you, and at last have shot you out of his sling into hell. He hath brought you from prison that he might bring you to a throne of grace, and give you a pardon.

(2.) Compassionate others, and assist the Spirit, when you find him at work upon others, in such a condition. By this we become like Christ, who learned pity to us by experience of our infirmities; and we should learn it to others, by reflection on what we felt ourselves. To quench smoking flax is to be unlike our Saviour, and thwart the work of the Spirit; kindle it, therefore, into a quicker flame by your breath. Nothing so tender as an afflicted conscience, which therefore must be tenderly dealt with. Rake not in the wounds of any that are afflicted for sin; to help forward affliction will be as little pleasing to God in spiritual as temporal troubles. The Spirit acts in this office as a comforter, and the comforts you have had are for others as well as yourselves: 2 Cor. i. 4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' Pour in, therefore, balm, and not vinegar.

(3.) Take heed of offending and quenching the Spirit. Let not new sins make the Spirit take his old sword into his hand; the second wound will be worse than the first. Love enraged strikes more keenly. David had more sharp terrors after his fall into the sins of murder and adultery than any time before that we read of. Anguish and terror will fall on the doers of iniquity, to the Jew, the professing party, as well as to the Gentiles, Rom. ii. 9, 10, but glory and peace, spiritual communications of divine goodness, and an unspotted joy, attend the doing good. If you would avoid wounds of conscience, avoid sins which grieve the Spirit. Conscience, that checks men for acts of a sensual life, even for those that are more generous, never checks the soul for its aspiring upward, and attempts toward a closer communion with God. Peace is the 'effect of righteousness,' Isa. xxxii. 17; the loving God's law affords great peace, peace in abundance, Ps. cxix. 165. Peace can then only be as the river, when our righteousness is as the waves of the sea; therefore quench not that Spirit that hath convinced you, and do not by new sins drive him away.

(4.) Exercise faith much. Faith was first acted by you before you were

brought from under those pressures you felt; it must be still acted for keeping them from returning on you. Faith was the medicine that cured your wounds, and faith is the only antidote to prevent new ones; faith acted will make your inherent righteousness more vigorous, and the more holiness the more peace. Christ constantly in the eye will make Christ formed in the heart thrive and rejoice.

Secondly, The second branch of the exhortation is to those who are under convictions for sin. If there be any that at present are under conviction for sin,

(1.) Murmur not against God. It is the Spirit's work; murmur not, therefore, against him; let not your hearts fret within you while the Spirit is raking up the mud to make you view it; let there be no breakings out of impatience whereby to quench the Spirit. Murmuring is the way to lose the possession of our souls and the expectation of our comforts. Deal not with God as Job's wife would have had him to have done, 'Curse God, and die,' Job ii. 9. Tumultuousness of spirit against God is a diabolical temper, a resemblance to that of the damned, who blaspheme God under their torments, and curse God when sin gnaws their conscience. To lie patient under the Spirit's hand is a Christ-like frame, who uttered not a word against his Father, when the sins of all the world were laid upon him to bear the punishment of them. Speak well of God, and as bad of the loathsomeness of your hearts as the Spirit himself doth. This is a holy compliance. To hinder pettishness, consider God as a sovereign who hath power over you, and as a gracious sovereign who hath an affection for a man under his rebukes; represent him to yourselves, not only in his severity, but in his mercy also, laying the foundation deep that he may make the building more strong, beautiful, and lasting. Murmur not, unless you had rather remain in league with the devil than have the band broken.

(2.) Run to the same hand for healing which wounded you. The wounds of the Spirit may sometimes be skinned over by other helps, and left inwardly rankling, but they can be cured only by the same hand that made them: Isa. lvii. 17, 18, 'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly, in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and unto his mourners.' It is the sense of God's wrath, the forfeiture of his favour, and the sinful distance man stands in from God, which chiefly chargeth the soul; the taking off his wrath, the beaming of his favour, filling up the gulf between God and the soul, belong only to God. The longing of a woman cannot be satisfied with the most delicious fruit if she hath not the very thing she longs for, but there will be indelible characters printed upon the fetus. Since our natural blindness by the fall, we are not able to find out truth, there is need of his Spirit to enlighten and guide us; hence is he called the Spirit of truth. And since sin raiseth storms in the conscience, which no wit of mere nature or strength of reason can compose, there is need of the Spirit to silence the storms of conscience; hence he is called a comforter, to dispel them. As you are wounded by the Spirit in the word, so look for cure from the Spirit in the word. Nathan had assured David of a pardon by God's order; David would expect the joy of it only from God by his Spirit: Ps. li. 12, 'Restore to me the joy of thy salvation.' Though he had an assurance from Nathan of a pardon, he would have it also from the Spirit of God. If the Spirit be silent, no other voice can be musical; give God, therefore, the honour of his own prerogative. The key of peace is held in the hand of God, not in the mouth of the creature; peace is contained in the cabinet of the word,

and God only can unlock it ; it is an effect of God's creating power, Isa. lvii. 19. Since the conquest sin hath made of us, the heart is but a tempestuous place ; there is always matter for storms, as in the world for exhalations ; when they are raised, only Christ by his Spirit can say to the waves, 'Be still.' Spiritual storms will obey no other voice. Till you find anything in the world that can equal God in a creative omnipotency, expect no peace from it ; sin must be removed before peace can be settled. Only the blood of Christ can stop the mouth of conscience, and none but the Spirit can drop it into the conscience. The application of it is only by the Spirit, as the offering it on the cross was by him. But it must not be in a way of enthusiastic expectation. As he wounded you in the word, so he will heal you by the word also. He is faithful to Christ that sent him, and takes of his to shew it to us, that is, of his truths ; he takes his healing herbs out of no other garden. Though peace be the fruit of a creative power, yet it is the fruit of the lips. And the Thessalonians received the 'joy of the Holy Ghost' by receiving the word,' 1 Thess. i. 6.

Thirdly, Have recourse to Christ's atonement. Troubles of spirit are the arraignment and indictment of the soul before God. It is by Jesus Christ only, in whom God hath writ all the characters of his mercy, that we can be freed from the danger. In him you will see a wrathful justice appeased, and a provoked God reconciled. It is this blood only that quenches the fury of God and the fire of conscience ; it is by his blood only we are justified, and by this blood only can we be pacified. An infinite wrath you fear, an infinite satisfaction must expel your fears ; that that quenches the fire of conscience, must be water from the well of salvation. There are two things trouble a convinced sinner, the sight of guilt and the weakness of righteousness. He sees himself much in debt, and nothing to satisfy, is sensible he is come short of the glory of God, that the righteousness of God will bar heaven against his unrighteousness. He must then go to Christ to pay his debt, and impart his righteousness. When David found iniquity prevailing, he had recourse to this, Ps. lxxv. 3. Christ is a physician for the sick, a saviour for the lost, a redeemer for the captives, a refiner for the filthy, a surety for the debtor, and a priest for the sensible sinner. In him we may see both our weakness and our remedy ; his riches will make us sensible of our poverty, his fulness of our emptiness, his medicines of our sickness, his ransom of our bondage, his glory of our misery. This is the way to make a legal conviction commence evangelical.

Fourthly, Those that are under conviction should wait upon God for a good issue. Be not too hasty to break prison, but stay God's leisure ; call upon him, and he will be near you in a way of grace, though not immediately in a way of comfort. 'The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him in truth,' Ps. xlv. 18. It is not for want of means that God doth not presently comfort ; he hath endless comforts by him, but he stays for a fit season, that he may come with double love, for his own glory and his creatures' advantage ; as Christ deferred the raising Lazarus till certainly dead, that the miracle of his resurrection might be indisputable, and his glory in raising him more illustrious. God leaves men under a cloud to exercise their faith, which many times is most strong where there is least feeling, otherwise it would not be faith but sense that would make us come to him by prayer ; he keeps the day dark that we may fly to him in prayer, which we should not regard had we comforts at pleasure. Hannah's soul must be poured out in tears before she can have the desire of her heart. God keeps us under matter of prayer, before he giveth us matter of praise, that we may praise him with higher strains : 'He that hath torn will heal, he that hath smitten will bind

up,' Hosea vi. 1. Exercise what little faith there is in such a case, Christ did so in his agony : ' He offered up strong cries and prayers to him that was able to save him from death.' God will knock off your fetters in time, when the soul finds the greatest need, and is in the fittest posture to glorify him : Ps. l. 15, ' Call upon me in a day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me ;' implying that God will deliver at such a time when there is the greatest occasion to glorify him ; when you are most humble, he will hear your cry, 2 Chron. vii. 14.

Fifthly, All the time of your waiting for the taking off your trouble which may be upon your spirit, desire cleansing as well as comforting grace. To desire only comfort is more selfish, to desire purging is an aim more at the glory of God, who cannot be honoured without holiness. David put up more prayers for purging than pardoning mercy. The waters that proceed from the throne of the Lamb are not only refreshing and cooling, but also purging and cleansing. A divine nature is necessary to a divine peace ; cordials are not so necessary, but may be dangerous, when the humours are strong ; purging is then more needful. The comforting Spirit is first a Spirit of holiness, and Christ is Melchizedek, a king of righteousness, before a king of peace. Besides, restoratives are best when purgatives have gone before. Now because men are apt to run to wrong means, and take ways of stupefying rather than rightly appeasing conscience, it will not be amiss to give some directions to avoid this rock on which some split. Man is so full of enmity against God, that he takes hold of what first comes to hand, and would rather gather ease from any thing than go to a mediator of God's appointment. A sense of sin is always attended with a look after a remedy : O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ? Take heed of some things in such a case :

(1.) Take heed of false opinions. As the word is the instrument of comfort, so the truth upon which comfort is founded must be tried by the word. The Spirit must take of Christ's, the truths of Christ, and shew it to us : ' The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,' Ps. xix. 8. Poison may be fair to the eye, and delightful to the palate, but hurtful to the life. Men in distress of spirit are apt to catch at every rotten plank, like men ready to be drowned. Puddle-water will be swallowed down in extremity, as eagerly as the juice of a delicious grape ; the appetite desiring something to cool the bowels, considers only what may give it some refreshment. False judgments either of the disease or of the proper remedy are equally dangerous. In this case men are like sick persons, that ask advice of every friend, scrape up many remedies, but never go to a skilful physician. Take heed of false opinions.

(2.) Take heed of carnal counsel in such a case. For if the Spirit be the author of conviction, cleaving to any carnal counsel is turning the back upon the Spirit. Flesh and blood are bad counsellors in this affair, they will consult their own ease and seek their own satisfaction ; to consult with them is to disobey God, Gal. i. 6. Christ would not suffer one that desired to be his disciple to turn back, and take leave of his friends, which was but an act of civility, Luke ix. 61 ; perhaps, because by them he might have been diverted from his religious resolution, and his answer to him intimates as much : ver. 62, ' No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Unbelieving hearts, unbelieving friends are the worst counsellors in the world, and the most miserable comforters, their counsels are the devil's delight and the Spirit's grief. Such will quench not only the fire in the conscience, but the Spirit too that kindled it, and

cause him to depart. The best way in this case is, to have the counsel of the wicked far from you, Job xxi. 16.

(3.) Our own righteousness and a road of formal services is to be taken heed of. In this case our own righteousness is so far from being a means to ease us, that it is a bar to true peace, by keeping us from that righteousness that can only purchase it, and only effect it in us. Pride was the cause of our ruin in Adam, and what was the cause of our ruin cannot be our remedy. This temper manifests the heart to be full of the proud pharisee's, an enemy to Christ, for it grudges him the title of a Saviour. An imperfect righteousness cannot afford a perfect peace; the righteousness of a sinful nature is not the righteousness of a pure law; a thorough conviction throws away a man's righteousness as well as his sin, in point of justification and in point of consolation; and to expect peace from a road of formal duties is to trust in the arm of flesh. Paul calls all things so when he opposed 'rejoicing in the flesh' to 'rejoicing in Christ,' Philip. iii. 3. By flesh he means all things different from Christ, and to go to a creature is to depart from the Lord. Take heed therefore of valuing your own tears in the room of Christ's blood, your own petitions in the room of his intercessions, and applauding yourselves in a vain righteousness, instead of the meritorious satisfaction of the blood of God, as though a few good duties could expiate a multitude of sins. What are a few tears but a drop to the sea of our guilt? What are our petitions but as the breath of a child to the storms of our provocations? our righteousness but as a mite to the many talents of our unrighteousness? Sinful duties cannot make an infinite and holy satisfaction. As these were not our saviour, so they cannot be our comforter; they have no blood to shed for us, and therefore have no power to heal us.

(4.) Take heed of carnal contentments and sensual pleasures. Saul called for music to drive away the evil spirit; so do some for sensual delights, to drive away the Holy Spirit; set up projects in the world to avoid the noise in their own consciences; and sometimes sinful merriments to expel the good Spirit by an impure devil, is as if a man should endeavour to quench fire with burning pitch, or cure the gout by a stab at the heart. Thus men use all arts to stifle convictions, but the end of their mirth is heaviness, Prov. xiv. 13. What creature can cure the wound that God makes? What can comfort when the Almighty troubles? All carnal contentments can no more remove inward and spiritual distempers than a crown can cure the headache, or a golden slipper the pain of the gout. Therefore, go to none of these things, but run to that hand which did wound you, unto the Spirit of God, who is the author of conviction. The

Third exhortation, to those who are desirous to have spiritual conviction; to be convinced of sin.

First, Desire the Spirit to pull the scales from your eyes which Satan hath put on; beg of God, 'What I see not, teach thou me;' desire him to lead you into the seminary of corruption, and cause you to possess your sins, till you cry out, Guilty, guilty; to see them in their filthiness, not as a dunghill in a picture, but as a real dunghill, offending a delicate smell. This course Job took, Job xiii. 23, when he considered the multitude of his sins: 'Make me to know my iniquity and my sin,' not only with a simple but sensible knowledge.

Secondly, Meditate much upon the sense Christ had of sin. Consider how his understanding was enlarged to the highest pitch of knowledge; not a grain of malice or ingratitude in the bowels of sin but was within the compass of his apprehension. He understood the holiness of that God that was offended with sin. Conceive Christ in his agonies; consider how much sin hath dis-

pleased and injured God, sunk and ruined the soul, and this may be some assistance, by the means of the Spirit, for gaining a spiritual conviction. A spiritual sense Christ had, and the consideration of him and imitation of him is the way for us to have a spiritual sense of sin.

Thirdly, Study the law in its spiritual meaning, and in the extent of it. Paul apprehended the law in its spirituality, which before he understood according to the pharisaical interpretation, which dulled its edge in its operations.

Fourthly, Set every doctrine you know home upon your conscience. There is a double knowledge, dogmatical and affectionate. We may know many things that do not affect us ; we may be affectedly ignorant, when we are dogmatically knowing. Paul knew the law by the means of Gamaliel, at whose feet he sat, but had no sense of it, till Christ came and brought the sense of it from his head to his heart.

Fifthly, Attend upon the means. God will honour the word with convincing men of sin, even of those sins which the light of nature would manifest : as David of murder and adultery, which God would convince him of by the prophet.

Sixthly, Suppress not any convictions when they flash in upon you ; let them have their perfect work. Cherish every conviction the Spirit fastens upon you while it is warm upon your affections. It is dangerous to suppress it. The Spirit's operations will not be fruitless ; it will end in a full conviction, or in a curse. If the Spirit hath invited himself, and hath been refused to be a physician, he may leave you remediless ; he may have no more hand to knock, but dust to shake off from his feet, as a token of his final leaving you. And wait upon God in the use of means ; it is there that the Spirit doth breathe ; it is by the word he doth convince, as well as by the word he doth comfort.