

Monergism

DISCOURSES ON

SIN AND
UNBELIEF

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Discourses on Sin and Unbelief

by Stephen Charnock

Table of Contents

A DISCOURSE OF CONVICTION OF SIN

---- I. He was to convince of sin.

---- II. The Spirit was to convince of righteousness.

---- III. The Spirit was to convince of judgment.

---- IV. The fourth thing; what sins, or what in sin the Spirit doth chiefly convince of!

---- 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.

---- VI. The application.

A DISCOURSE OF UNBELIEF, PROVING IT IS THE GREATEST SIN

A DISCOURSE OF THE MISERY OF UNBELIEVERS

A DISCOURSE SHEWING WHO ARE UNBELIEVERS

A DISCOURSE OF CONVICTION OF SIN

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 16:8, 9.

OUR Saviour in this chapter shows 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 15:26; 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 16:2:

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. 5:15, 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 intendment 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 3:18, '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. 4:4-6, '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 14:17; 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,

elegancy, 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. 14:24, '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 8:9. 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 14:17. 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 throughly 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. 6:3, '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. 3:20.

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 2:1, '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. 8:15, '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. 88:15, 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. 12:10, 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. 5:5, 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. 4:4. 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. 40:7, '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 rewards 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. 5:19, 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. 1:32; 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. 5:3, Ezek. 18:25, 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 2:10, 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 consequents of sin in their dreadfulness, 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. 6:21, '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. 19:12, 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. 1:21, '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. 7:9. 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. 4:17, 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 3:20, '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 overswaying 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. 4:19, which is the state of men by nature, it being the state of all the Gentiles. The fuller of dead works, the more listless most 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 19:2, 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. 10:22, 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 reproof, 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, ἐλέγχειν, 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 3:16, '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 thorough 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 dreadfulnes 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. 8:21, 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 it 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 babbling 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. 2:15. And when this cometh and gives full evidence, the mouth is stopped, Rom. 3:19, and the soul is said to die, Rom. 7:9, 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. 11:4, 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 reprov'd 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. 3:21–23. 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. 19:12, '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. 7:7, 'I had not known sin but by the law;' by this sin is revived: Rom. 7:9, '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. 3:19, '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. 5:20; 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, τετραηλισμένα, everything in the whole composition of it lies open to public view, Heb. 4:12, 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. 17:10 It is God's heart, like Elisha, in 2 Kings 5:26, 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. 2:8, 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. 11:5, 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. 5:3) 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. 20:27, 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 onto those principles, and helping as 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 onto 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 motes 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 27:6. It brings not only the substance of sin but the circumstances to mind, and what rebukes itself gave before to hinder the commission, just as it will at the last day deliver those truths that were suppressed and clouded in unrighteousness, and usher them in as be 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 4:29, 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. 119:59, '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 2:11; he hath no clear knowledge of the nature of sin and the dreadfulness 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. 3:6, Judges 13:22, Isa. 6:6.

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 subtile 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 36:8–10. 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. 13:27, a patting 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. 7:6, and 'filled with bitterness,' Job 9:18. 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. 77:4, 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 9:4, 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. 12:21. 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. 3:10,

'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. 3:19. 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. 14:25. Thus by sharpening his arrows in the hearts of his enemies, Ps. 45:5, 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 2; fornication upon the woman of Samaria, by Christ, John 4:18. 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 27:4, 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. 51:10; 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 blasphemmer 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. 18:21.

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 5:19, 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. 6:5, 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 3:6, 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. 51:5. 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. 32:33, 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, dang, 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 infections than plagues: Isa. 57:20, 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 9:30, 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 be 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 deceivableness 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. 7:15. 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. 9:20, 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. 9:20, 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 unfix'd, 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. 15:58, '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 6:4. Nature likes not to retain anything of God in its knowledge,

Rom. 1:28; 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 stunted 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. 4:18, '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 10:10, 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. 6:17, whereby he cuts open the soul. By this he did execution upon those whose hands were red with the blood of Christ, Acts 2. 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. 12:7, 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. 3:5. 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. 1:14. 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. 6:3, 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. 4:13; and that sins, even secret sins, are set in the light of his countenance, Ps. 90:8. 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. 10:3, and the killing of them was a bond or handwriting, whereby they confessed themselves obnoxious to the curse, and debtors to punishment, Col. 2:14. 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. 4:23, '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. 13:1. 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 42:6, 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 band 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. 2:19, 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. 88:5. 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. 119:119, 120, '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 8:28. 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. 32:1, 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. 14:25 and with submissiveness will bear the indignation of the Lord, Micah 7:9. 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 comfort, 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. 12:10. 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 successful. 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 1:11 and 2:5. 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 thorn 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 16:13, discovers God in all his excellencies. Satan is the ruler of darkness: Eph. 6:12, '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. 4:4, 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 16:14, '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. 2:12. 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. 3:1.

(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. 16:11, 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 ourselves, 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. 5:8. 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 unacquainted-ness 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 acknowledged 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 15:26, '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 4:29. 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. 11:10. 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. 14:24. 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, whatsoever 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 13:10; 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. 6:16. 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. 66:1, 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. 61:1. 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. 34:12, 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 12:27, '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. 116:6; 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. 42:6. 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. 1:4, '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. 2:9, 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. 32:17; the loving God's law affords great peace, peace in abundance, Ps. 119:165. 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 2:9. 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. 57:17, 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 foetus. 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. 51:12, '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. 57:19. 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 receding the word,' 1 Thess. 1:6.

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. 65:3. 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. 145:18. 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 6:1. 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. 50:15, '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. 7:14.

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. 19:8. 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. 1:6. 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 9:61; 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 21:16.

(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. 3:3. 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. 14:13. 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 13:23, 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 displeased and injured God, sunk and rained 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.

A DISCOURSE OF UNBELIEF, PROVING IT IS THE GREATEST SIN

Of sin, because they believe not on me.—JOHN 16:9.

THERE were two observations in this text:

1. The Spirit is the author of conviction of sin.
2. Unbelief is a sin of the greatest malignity against God.

For the second,

Of sin. Not of sins, but sin. The Spirit convinceth of all sins, but chiefly of a state of sin, of unbelief.

First, As the fountain of all sin. It was the first sin of Adam. Not unbelief of a mediator, but the not giving credit to the precept of God, and the reality of God's intention in commanding. There was a jealousy that God had not dealt sincerely and plainly with him in the precept, as if he thought the prohibition was not so much an act of his sovereignty, as an act of his envy. It was the cause also of all the sin that grew up to such maturity in the old world; they had not faith in that first promise made to Adam, and without question transmitted by him to his posterity. The faith of Abel is applauded, Heb. 11:4; consequently the unbelief of Cain, the head of the wicked world, is marked. If Abel's sacrifice was more excellent in regard of his faith, Cain's was more vile in regard of his unbelief.* The apostle, shewing that faith makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, begins his discourse with the two examples of faith and unbelief in those brothers. Abel's faith seems to be thus in his offering: 1. He considered his own sin transferred upon that innocent victim, thereby understanding the demerit of his sin, as deserving wrath and death for it. 2. He considered that this sacrifice, being the

blood of a beast, could not take away sin; but that it was typical of the Lamb promised, upon which his sins were to be transferred, and to whom they were to be imputed, and accordingly acted faith on that promise of the seed, and desired God not to impute his sins to him, but to that Lamb which was to be slain; and this the very nature of his sacrifice, being bloody, and the character the apostle gives of his faith, intimates. Cain had not faith in the promised seed; he brings an offering to God of the fruits of the ground, not a bloody sacrifice, whereby he might signify the acknowledgment of his own desert, and his reliance on that Lamb of God whose heel was to be bruised, who was to be made an offering. The kinds of their sacrifices imply two different conceits in them. Cain's seems to be only a present to acknowledge God the author of the good things he had, at the best, or to oblige God rather; for the ground of all his wrath was, because God did not respect his offering, did not testify a well-pleaseness with it. His offering was do signification of his sin, nor a type of the promised seed; he owned God as creator, not as redeemer.* Cain and his posterity, which infected the old world, disregarded that promise of the seed of the woman, slighted the offers made in it, and resisted the strivings of the Spirit with them against their unbelief, which was principally the matter of the Spirit's striving, because he acted with them as the Spirit of Christ the Messiah, 1 Peter 3:18, 19, and therefore to accept him with a sense of that sin, which was properly against that person in whose name he came and by whom he acted. The Spirit was then in the world striving against their unbelief in the promise, as he is now in the world striving against unbelief in the performance.

2. As the ligament and band of all sin: John 8:24, 'If you believe not that I am he,' the Messiah sent of God, 'you shall die in your sins;' unless you believe me to be that seed of the woman, promised by the merit of my death to reconcile the world, you will sink with all the mass of your sins upon you. If unbelief be removed from a soul, the guilt of all other sins departs with it; if that remain, the guilt of all other sins is bound and fastened with an adamant chain upon the soul, and that with more crimson aggravations; where the notices of

a mediator have been revealed, there is a superadded guilt to all the rest. As faith is the only means whereby we gain a pardon, so unbelief is the only formal cause of condemnation, though other sins are the meritorious cause of eternal death. As no price had been paid for our redemption, unless Christ had offered his blood, so no application can be made of that price to us without faith in that blood. Upon this, sins are flung into the depths of the sea; upon the other, they remain with their whole weight upon the soul.

In general. That unbelief is the greatest sin, appears,

1. Because God employs the highest means to bring men to a sense of it. This is in the text. It is the work of the Spirit to convince of this sin. The odiousness of sin to God appears by his sending Christ to expiate it; the odiousness of unbelief to God appears by his sending the Spirit to reprove it. That which calls for the Spirit's descent from heaven, in order to a conviction of it, is attended with black aggravations. This is the great errand of the Holy Ghost to the world; the first thing he does is to open the understanding, the eye of the soul, to see the malignity of other things, in order to convince the conscience of this before he changeth the will. This is the principal fort against which the Spirit plants his battery, and it is the last that is surrendered. A terrified sinner would run from the shot that is showered about his ears; he would reform, he would be holy, but cries out still, loath to believe. The prodigal will be next door to starving, before he will come to his father; and the woman with the bloody issue will spend all her estate before she will come to Christ.

And indeed it is a sin so deeply rooted that,

- (1.) Reason cannot convince of it. Christ, the object proposed, is above the reach of a rational eye, and therefore the sin against him is not discerned in its blackness by mere reason. Reason will not inform a man of the stupendous love of God in sending his Son to die for men, that were and would be unprofitable servants. Neither doth it consist with the natural notion men have of the justice of God, to

lay upon an innocent person the sins of guilty offenders. It cannot naturally enter into any man's heart, that he that by power and wisdom made the world, should design by the cross and the foolishness of preaching to save it; that he that is infinite in love and mercy should make his Son to suffer. It is not therefore by the sparklings of bare reason men can see the blackness of this sin. Other sins may be known by natural light, because the duties to which they are opposite may be known by the light of nature. As the Spirit only discovers the greatness of Christ, the excellency of his person, the preciousness of his passion, so it also only shews what a sin it is to reject Christ. As faith is 'the gift of God,' Eph. 2:8, a grace more peculiarly the birth of heaven, so the extirpation of its opposite must only be from God.

(2.) Natural conscience of itself helps not in this conviction. It indeed maintains the quarrel against other sins, and plains the way for the Spirit's victory. But in this case there is no auxiliary force from conscience, nothing of a natural interest to plead for faith. It finds all the powers of the soul prejudiced against it, maintaining a war against the doctrine of the gospel; and the tide of our own natures carry us forcibly against it. The Spirit enters the lists singly and maintains the duel alone. So that what was said of the temple may more properly be said of this, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'

2. It is a sin against the gospel; not as a killing law, but an healing command; a blacker sin, because against a better covenant. It is his peculiar gospel command; a precept of the highest valuation with him: 1 John 3:23, 'This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' Not only in regard of his authority (for so others were his commands), but in regard of the affection he hath to it, it being most pleasing to him, as ver. 22 intimates. The disobedience of this command, then, is most disgustful and hateful to him; it is his command, as being the last that ever he will give; it is a dispensation from the rigour of those commands in the covenant of works, but is to be followed with no

dispensation by any other. The sin against it, then, is against the utmost gracious command that God will ever give. Other sins are against the precepts of his sovereignty, this against the precepts of his grace, as well as his sovereignty. The keeping this command brings him near to us to abide in us, ver. 24, the breaking this command sets him at a distance from us, and makes our persons and services loathsome to him. Wickedness against the gospel is greater than wickedness against the law, because the evangelical revelation hath more of grace and more of glory, the sin against it hath more of contempt and more of heinousness; a sin against that is a sin dyed seven times blacker, and will have a furnace seven times hotter. It is against the gospel, which is so holy a declaration of God's will that there cannot be an holier; so good in itself, so profitable for man, that nothing can be better; the sin therefore against it is so bad, that nothing can be worse. The law or covenant of works never discovered the object of faith, and therefore never enjoined any such formal act of faith in a mediator, and therefore takes no cognisance of this sin of unbelief. It, not making known the person to be believed in, cannot make known the sin of not believing. If the law commanded faith in relation to the object of Christ crucified, it must then acquaint us with Christ crucified. It would be an unreasonable law to enjoin an act about such an object, and never discover one syllable of that object to us. It doth not appear that Adam had any knowledge of Christ; the revelation of that bears date after his fall, at the time of the first promise. If unbelief were a sin only against the law, then those that reject the gospel would be liable to no more punishment, than if they had been only under the law; but they will, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse. This faith is the peculiarity of the gospel; and when Christ is said to come 'preaching the gospel,' the matter of it is, 'repent and believe,' Mark 1:14, two things that never entered into the heart of the law to conceive. It is therefore a sin against the whole gospel, since the design of that is to remove our suspicions of God, and establish a trust in him; upon which account the Gentiles, that are without the gospel, are described by the title of men 'without hope,' 1 Thes. 4:13. Unbelief is a making ourselves

without ground of hope, contrary to all the encouragements of hope which God gives us in the gospel.

3. Unbelief is a sin against the highest testimony. It is against the two greatest witnesses that ever were, or can be, viz., the Father and the Son. The Father in the Old Testament, the Son in the New: John 8:17, 18, 'I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.' What did they witness? That Christ was the light of the world, ver. 12. The Father witnessed this in the Scripture: Isa. 49:6, 'I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles;' and by the works he did, John 10:37. Christ the eternal λόγος (the word) bears witness to his human nature. Since the testimony of two men of credit is worthy of belief, much more the testimony of two persons in the Deity, infallible in their testimony, in whom there can be no suspicion of falsity. Therefore Christ saith to Nicodemus, John 3:11, 'We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen.' We, i.e. my Father and I; in answer to Nicodemus, who, ver. 2, acknowledged him a teacher come from God; therefore, saith Christ, we, God who hath sent me, and I, witness this. The witness follows, ver. 15, that 'whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' It is a sin against the witness of the whole Bible.

4. As faith is the choicest grace, so that which is opposite to it must be the greatest sin. It hath as high a place among sins, as faith hath among graces, and hath the precedency of all other sins, as faith hath the pre-eminence above all other graces; and what faith is in the nature of grace, unbelief is contrary to it in the nature of sin. Faith glorifies God, unbelief vilifies him; one justifies him, the other condemns him. 'Faith works by love,' Gal. 5:6, excites a love of God, and is excited by it; unbelief works by hatred. Faith is the spirit that quickens all obedience; all the fruits of the Spirit grow upon the root of faith; all the fruits of the flesh grow upon the root of unbelief. Faith turns common works into acts of grace, as the chemist doth metals into gold; unbelief turns all into dung and poison. Faith makes every prayer, though weak, an acceptable sacrifice; our prayers can no more enter into heaven by unbelief than the Israelites

could enter into Canaan. As Christ is 'precious to them that believe,' 1 Peter 1:7, so is he odious to them that believe not; as faith is a consent to take Christ for an husband, so unbelief is a flat refusal of him. Faith cuts off all self-exaltation: Rom. 3:27, 'Boasting is excluded by the law of faith,' and by the grace of faith too; unbelief supports it. It is a keeping up a pride greater than that of Adam's, a pride against God; it is indeed the Beelzebub, the prince of all those legions of sinful devils that quarter in the heart of a natural man.

5. It is more odious and loathsome to God, and hath in some respect a greater demerit in it, than sins against the light of nature. 'The killing an ox is as the slaying a man,' Isa. 66:3. Not simply the killing an ox, but by reason of the unbelief in the Messiah, the ground of keeping up the ceremonial worship by sacrifices after the exhibition of Christ in the promise, which made a worship formerly instituted as odious as murder, which was a disparaging the image of God. Sodom was not defiled by its pollutions, as Capernaum was by refusing Christ. Who can think of the sin of Sodom without indignation and horror? Yet the punishment of unbelievers being greater than theirs, implies the sin to be more grievous; because the unspotted righteousness of God would not inflict a punishment above the merit of the offence; he exacts no more than iniquity deserves, Job 11:6. Now, 'it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for' a city or person that rejects the offers of the gospel, Mat. 10:15. That city was an epitome of hell both for sin and judgment, yet that defiling sin hath less guilt, less filth than the rejecting, purifying gospel grace. The punishment of Sodom should be like that of the whip to the punishment of rebels under the light of the gospel, which should be as the torment of a rack. The sin therefore is of a lighter tincture, like petty larceny to murder. All other sins indeed strike at some one or two attributes of God, and of God as considered as Creator; but this is a formal injury to God in all his perfections, and as appearing in the richest dress. Other sins being conversant about some created matter, preferring some creature before God, this is a preferring that very sin, the loathsomest thing under heaven, before a God of glory and an

excellent Saviour. Other sins are conversant immediately about some inferior object, this strikes directly at God himself. It is therefore called the sin: Heb. 12:1, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.' The name of weight is given to other sins, but unbelief is called the sin. Most understand it of original concupiscence; but since it is the use the apostle makes of the former doctrine, Heb. 11, concerning the excellency of faith, I think it is more consonant to understand it of unbelief, the sin contrary to that faith he had been so highly commending. This is the provocation: Num. 14:11, 'How long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me?' They were guilty of many other provocations, but God reckons their incredulity as the top of all. It flings most dirt upon all the attributes of God, and doth not only wrong the Deity singly considered, but bears a spite at all the three persons.

In handling this subject, I shall shew,

1. What is to be understood by unbelief.
2. Wherein the sinfulness of it consists.

1. What is to be understood by unbelief.

First, negatively, what it is not.

We must not understand by it,

First, a want of assurance. Drooping spirits may be believers. There is a manifest distinction made between faith in Christ and the comfort of that faith; between believing to eternal life, and knowing we have eternal life: 1 John 5:13, 'These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.' There is a difference between a child's having a right to an estate, and his full knowledge of the title. There may be a trust in God where there is a walk in darkness, Isa. 50:10. If faith be not assurance, unbelief is not the want of it. If faith were assurance, a

man would be justified before he believed; he must be justified before he can know himself justified. The object always precedes the knowledge of its existence; the sun must be risen before I know it is risen. If the want of assurance were this unbelief, a child of God would be an unbeliever every time God is pleased to draw a cloud between heaven and the soul, and deny him the present tastes of the hidden manna. Unbelief is a sin, the want of assurance is not; to have it is not our duty but God's dispensation; he hath obliged the believer to seek it, but not to possess it. Assurance is a fruit that grows out of the root of faith: the fruits in winter appear not upon the tree. Because I see not a flourishing top, shall I deny the existence and sappiness of the root? Mary, when she wept at Christ's feet, had no assurance of his love, yet Christ sends her away with the encomiums of her faith, acted before the comfort dropped from his lips, Luke 7:48, 50. The characters of faith may be written in the heart as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished; the dust hinders the reading of the letters, but doth not raze them out.

Secondly, not every interruption of the act of faith. Faith may lie asleep in the habit, when it doth not walk about in the act. A man upon this account can no more be called an unbeliever than a man asleep can be called a dead man. A believer may, like Samson, lose his present strength while he retains his life. Christ's prayer propped up Peter's faith from failing, when there was as little appearance of faith in him at one time as of life in a dead man; yet all that time there was a pulse of faith beating in him, which was made sensible by his Saviour's look. Faith is the vital principle: 'The just shall live by faith,' and where this is, though in a weak degree, such a person cannot be denominated an unbeliever. Fogs and mists darken the sun, but put not out that eye of the world; the sun shines though there be an interception of his beams. Yet this is but temporary. A true believer cannot be long without acting faith, no more than a living man can be without breath and some kind of motion. Thomas was not without faith, though his faith was at present asleep and had a defect in it.

Thirdly, not doubts, which may frequently step up in the soul. Such there are in the beginnings of faith, when the state of the soul is like that of the twilight, a mixture of light and darkness. Such a condition the soul is in, in its first conversion; as the Jews were when the chains of their captivity were knocked off, 'like men in a dream,' Ps. 126:1, 2, scarcely believing the performance of that which they vehemently desired, expected and believed in the promise, scarce imagining that they, so lately dead in a civil sense, should live and return to their land. When men are in a state of nature, they are most swayed by self-love and presumption; when they come into a state of grace, there riseth up jealousy and fear, and they think they cannot run far enough from the other extreme. This is a jealousy principally of themselves, but it redounds upon God. The mother and nurse of it is a secret partial infidelity, the ignorance of the promise, power, and extent of the mediation of Christ. This is not an unbelief habitually settled; it is rather a misbelief than unbelief, and rather a start of passion, a fit of infirmity, as Asaph: Ps. 77:10, 'This is my infirmity,' when he had doubted whether there were any mercy left in God, when he believed God had parted with all his bowels, it was from a sudden storm, not a settled way of argumentation. Not only at the beginning of faith, but after a full-grown faith, there may be some doubtings. David was none of the lowest form; when in a fit he gives the lie to God through the sides of his prophets: Ps. 116:10, 11, 'I said in my haste all men are liars;' I did not seriously, and as my judgment, say so. All men are liars, the prophets too, who have brought to me the message of a kingdom. He casts the dint of his passion in the face of the promise; this was the pang of unbelief, not an evil heart of unbelief. He was a man after God's own heart in his state, though not in that act. Doubting doth not imply a want of faith, but a weakness of faith. Christ acknowledged the few grains of Peter's faith when he reproveth him for doubting: Mat. 14:31, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising into a flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ, and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look, and sends forth a cry to his Saviour acknowledging his

sufficiency: Mat. 14:30, 'Lord, save me.' Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust, and make us take faster hold on God: Ps. 56:3, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is no relying upon God), not like a boat, carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a comforter against such fears, and to expel those thick fumes of nature.

Fourthly, Neither are temptations to unbelief and unbelieving thoughts injected, the unbelief I mean. If these be not entertained, though in regard of their matter they are unbelieving thoughts, yet formally they are not acts of our unbelief. If such thoughts in themselves were acts of our unbelief, while they are disowned by us, what shall we say to Christ, who had as great incentives to diffidence proposed to him by the devil as are to any of his members, Mat. 4:3, who yet was without the least spot? The proposal is Satan's, the entertainment only makes them ours. A true believer will not harbour such thoughts of God; they may be forced in, and paused upon, but they can find no standing credit in the heart, but will be regarded as the hissings of the old serpent. If you receive them as a flash of lightning in your faces, shut your eyes against them, give them their pass, and command them to depart with a Get thee hence, Satan. If you pour out tears upon every assault, as Asaph did after he had had a multitude of them (Ps. 73:21, 'Thus was my heart grieved, and I was pricked in my reins,' his soul and all his affections were wounded, because of those foolish imaginations of God); I say, if we do thus, and run to heaven for help, it frees us from the charge of a state of unbelief upon this account. That cannot be unbelief that resists unbelief. Whatsoever votes against such thoughts is not a friend to them. If they be entertained with a temporary delight,

unless they fully overcome the soul, they do not declare us in a state of infidelity. But if they are received, delighted in, applauded, and grow to a settled and rooted notion, and spread their fruits in the life, the person cannot be excused from the charge of unbelief.

Fifthly, Nor is it an unbelief of some truths through ignorance, provided they be not fundamental. Zacharias was a believer, and expecter of the Messiah, Luke 1:6; he could not else be said to be righteous, walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, yet believed not that particular word spoken to him by the angel, ver. 20; and the disciples believed not the testimony of those that witnessed the resurrection of Christ, Mark 16:11, 13, 14. Every error in the head doth no more destroy the truth of faith, than every miscarriage in the life through infirmity nullifies the being of grace, or every spot upon the face impair the beauty and features of it. The apostles, those glorious instruments of the propagation of the gospel, and the first commissioned ambassadors of Christ, believed all the time of Christ's life, and after his death too, according to the notion of the Jews, that the Messiah was to rear a temporal kingdom. Herein their errors were the same with the Jews'. But they had a faith in believing this person Jesus to be the Messiah, and resting upon him for salvation; so that they had an habitual faith in the person, with a partial unbelief. The Jews had a total unbelief in the person, though an assent to, and mistaken expectation of the promise; nay, after the Spirit of God descended upon them, they would not believe the conversion of the Gentiles, though the Scripture was more full of promises of that than the conversion of the Jews; and they limited that precept of Christ of preaching to every creature as if it were meant only of that nation; yet those times were the richest for the knowledge of Christ and faith in him that ever were; and though before that they were ignorant of the design of the death of Christ, and did not believe his resurrection upon a declaration of it, yet certainly their habitual faith was not expelled. Peter's faith did not fail at the time Christ lay in the grave, for both the promise and prayer of Christ was a bar against it. Their faith, indeed, was stupefied and nonplussed at present; but it is one thing not to believe

through weakness and ignorance, and another thing not to believe through wilfulness and neglect of enquiries. They did not believe the resurrection of Christ; but Peter, when he heard the news of it, did not supinely rest in his unbelief, but ran to inform himself, Luke 24:12. If a fundamental truth be not believed, be not enquired into, if a man is wilfully ignorant of it, I know not how he can be excused from unbelief; nay, if we have a doubt of any truth of God, and cherish that doubt with complacency, and are afraid it should be a truth, and wish it false, I question whether this be consistent with true faith. I am sure such an one is guilty of unbelief in that act, because it is an act of the will, delighting in that which is contrary to faith.

Sixthly, Nor is it a negative unbelief (*caentia simplex fidei*) which is in the heathens, that is here to be understood. The schools distinguish infidelity into *negativa* and *privativa*; the one is in the heathens, who never had the means of faith; the other *privativa*, which is *caentia fidei debitæ inesse*, is in those who are acquainted with the doctrine of the gospel, and therefore are obliged to believe. The heathens' unbelief, say the schoolmen,* is not their sin but their punishment, arising from the ignorance of divine revelation. There is a natural incapacity of acknowledging and believing that which never was discovered to them. A man may study sun, moon, and stars, yet never learn such a lecture as the death of the Son of God for the redemption of the world. Their ruin is not properly for the sin of unbelief, but for the sins against the first covenant, and against the law of nature, known and accepted by them; yet their ruin is for the want of faith, because those sins cannot be wiped off, but by faith in the blood of the second covenant; but they are not immediately chargeable with it as a sin. But the unbelief of those who live under the gospel, and believe not the report made to them, either from an affected ignorance, gross laziness, not inquiring into the truth, or a desperate contrariety to it, is a sin for which they are condemned. The heathens are under a material infidelity, because they are utterly ignorant of the matter of faith, never had anything of divine revelation; yet their ignorance being so great as to exclude faith, it is

a true infidelity. But those who have had sufficient proposals of the gospel, and receive it not in the truth and love of it, are guilty of a formal unbelief. The former necessarily want faith, because they want the object of it; the latter voluntarily want faith, because they have the revelation of the object made to them, and will not embrace it. This is not a sin in the heathens. If it were a sin not to believe, the obligation to believe must arise from the law of nature, or from some new declaration; not from the law of nature, because that could not instruct them in the doctrine of justification by a mediator. There are notions of morality writ in men's hearts by nature, but none of the gospel, and naturally men are obliged to no other obedience than what Adam in innocence was bound to; but Adam in that state was not bound to believe in a mediator, not because of any natural inability in him, but because of the unfitness of such a declaration of redemption to him in such a state, which needed no recovery, he then standing by another title. But since Adam was obliged, as a rational creature, to believe whatsoever God should reveal, and so bound to believe in Christ upon the revelation of Christ to him, such an obligation indeed lies upon all men, as they are rational creatures, and the posterity of Adam, to believe when a revelation is made to them; and when such a revelation is made to the heathens, they would be condemned for not believing, because in Adam they had power to believe, and lost it. But till that revelation be made, infidelity in the heathens is not their crime, no more than it is a crime to disobey a law which was never published and made known to the people. They can no more be condemned for not believing than you would punish a man in the night for not seeing the sun before it is risen, or for not dancing at the sound of music he never heard. The light of the gospel never dawned upon them, nor the sound of it ever arrived to their ears, yet they are condemned for want of believing in Christ, as a sick man dies for want of medicine to cure him, but his own sickness is the cause of his death. They are only obliged by the law of creation, but the gospel was not delivered to Adam by the law of creation, as he was a common person, but after he had put himself out of that capacity by his fall, and the headship put into other hands, the hands of Christ. The Scripture is

more suitable to submit to God's will than to question it. Such a dogmatical unbelief, which is not very rare among us, is an exploding the whole doctrine of the gospel, which is inexcusable and irrational, since men every day believe other things upon far less evidence than they have for the gospel, whose divine authority is witnessed by the manner of its propagation in all ages, contrary to the power, strength, parts, and eloquence of the world, and supported by a concurrence of providence against and under the violences of men.

Secondly, A doubting of the truth of the doctrine of the gospel. Many who will not openly deny it, yet question whether it be true, and think that which is true uncertain and dubious; this is unbelief. Such a doubtful opinion is no full assent, but a floating judgment, a suspicion that it may be true, and a suspicion that it may be false, like a pendulous weight which swings to and fro, as much on one side as on the other. There is an uncertainty in the speculative judgment, when a man knows not what he should assent to. There is indeed sometimes a doubting of admiration, which riseth not from any contrariety in the heart to the matter proposed, but implies a suitability of the heart to it; but by the greatness of the thing offered it is dazzled, as the eye by the splendour of the sun. Such an admiration was Abraham's at the power of God to raise seed out of such a dry root, Gen. 17:17; such a doubt had the blessed Virgin, which was joined with a modest inquiry for better instruction, Luke 1:24, her reason being nonplussed in the manner of the thing revealed to her above the course of nature. But where there is a doubt of diffidence of the great truths of the gospel,* regarding them as of doubtful credit, this is unbelief, because it is a judgment contrary to the doctrine of faith; for we are not only to believe that the things revealed are true, but that they are certain and infallible. As all suspicion is an opinion of evil with light conjectures, so a suspicion in matters of faith is an opinion of falsity upon light conjectures. Such a suspicion includes a judgment contrary to faith, because, without some judgment in the case, there cannot be an opinion of one thing or other. Since all men are in the rank of believers or unbelievers, a suspension of our belief of the doctrine of

the gospel cannot be ranked under the banner of faith; it is at best, for the present, a more modest refusal, rather than a downright rejection. As a man is thought to refuse a proposition when he seems unwillingly to comply with it, and will take time to consider, he that is not with Christ is against him, he that receiveth him not refuseth him. If faith be a certain knowledge,—John 17:8, 'They have known surely that I came out from thee,'—then an uncertain opinion is unbelief. In many men there is uncertainty from an acuteness of understanding, whereby they are dextrous in raising objections, as Mark 11:31, 33, which makes them uncertain how to steer themselves, like a needle between two loadstones, which refuseth neither, nor closeth with either of them. Such an unbelief there is among many of us, a believing a probability of the gospel, not the certainty; nay, scarce the probability, but owning it outwardly, as they would do a fashion.

Thirdly, Refusal to accept heartily of Christ upon the terms of the gospel, which is opposite to justifying faith, when there is not a fiducial motion to Christ as the centre. There may be assent, and, as some divines say, upon a divine motive, yet a man still under the notion of an unbeliever; for a dogmatical faith is not always accompanied with a justifying, though a justifying faith always supposeth a dogmatical, or assent to the truth as antecedent and preparatory, or else including it in its essence. The devils, from evident experience, believe there is a God, and believe the principles of the Christian religion (as we believe the wind blows, the sun shines, and the air freezeth); and they have had experience of the power of Christ wasting their kingdom. Both these faiths, dogmatical and justifying, must go together. There is a double act of the soul, the understanding to propose, the will to embrace, suitable to the double object in the promise, which must be considered as true, and so move the understanding as good, and so affect the will. This dogmatical faith is necessary, as a glass window that lets in the light. This unbelief is when, though men profess an assent to the truth with their understandings, yet they consent not to it with their wills, and by reason of corrupt habits, embrace it not as good; when, though

there is not an evil head, there is 'an evil heart of unbelief,' Heb. 3:12. They may may well be said not to believe a thing, who, though they believe the truth of it, yet have no due estimate of the goodness of it; when there is a sufficient evidence made to them, both of the truth and goodness of the matter revealed, they will not come up to the terms of the gospel. Such as those are in every assembly, who, though they dissent not from the truth of the Scripture, and the dogmatical points in it, yet they never seriously reflect upon them, have not valuations of them. They may have approbations of the truth as it is rational, but not an esteem and application of it as holy. They have no sense of the need of Christ, nor of the worth of Christ; value not the commands to obey him, nor the promises to rely upon him, nor Christ to embrace him, nor the threatenings to fear him. The precepts, as well as the promises of Christ, are the objects of faith, so the precepts, as well as the promises, are the objects of unbelief. The precepts are not the formal object of faith, but of obedience; yet he that believes not the precept believes not the promise, which is an encouragement of obedience to the precept. They then are unbelievers who, though they would have the safety Christ hath purchased, will not pay him the service he hath merited; who postpone the commands of the gospel to the indulgences of the flesh; who would have salvation, but reject the yoke. They renounce the articles of the gospel, that would preserve their sins, which Christ principally came to save from; and God counts such no less unbelievers than he did the Jews, who cried, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,' and would have nothing of the image of the Lord in their hearts. So then unbelief is properly a sin in those places where the gospel is preached; they are guilty of it who have heard the gospel. We must not cast it off from ourselves to the heathens; it is, indeed, their punishment, but our sin. That is disobedience to a law which is against that law, when it is revealed and known; and that is unbelief which is disobedience to the law of faith when discovered to men. Denial of the truth of the gospel, or contempt of the terms of the gospel, are properly and truly unbelief.

But of this practical unbelief I shall speak further in the sequel of this discourse. None will deny that the Jews were guilty of positive unbelief, who, though they did believe the gospel as it was veiled in their Mosaical rites, and firmly believed a Messiah, yet were opposers of him when the mask was taken off. What they believed in the Old Testament they rejected in the New. So among us men believe Christ to be the Messiah; they believe him with their heads and deny him with their hearts; they assent to him in the notion, and deny him in the application; they believe his person, and reject his doctrine.

2. Wherein the sinfulness of unbelief doth consist.

I. First, It is against God.

II. Secondly, It is worse than the sin of the Jews against Christ.

III. Thirdly, It hath many other reasons of sinfulness in it.

I. First, It is against God.

It strikes peculiarly at God. Whatsoever is done against any institution of God is interpreted by God as done against himself. When the Israelites, weary of Samuel's government, desired his resignation, and the electing of a king, God calls it a rejecting of himself, 1 Sam. 8:7, that he should not reign over them. The slighting a mortal creature in the ends whereto God hath appointed him, being a contempt of God, by whose authority he acts, a rejecting of Christ, who is the highest ordinance of God, whose words are the words of God spoken in his name, as God foretells, Deut. 18:19, is a breathing forth the highest disdain of God. Though it be an enmity immediately against Christ, it redounds to God, because Christ is his Christ, his anointed. The conspiracy is joint against both, a 'taking counsel against the Lord and his anointed, to break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from them,' Ps. 2:2. Let us cast away the promises of an eternal kingdom, and those threatenings of hell,* whereby they would allure us or scare us into an allegiance, to

submit our necks to the yoke of their laws. Let us slight all those reasons, and spurn away those vain hopes and fears, those cords whereby they would draw us unto their power. It casts a dishonour upon God more than all other iniquities; it is a departing from him after the highest and clearest declarations of his nature, a representation of him under all the disparagements imaginable, and under all encouragements of complying with him. As those that trust Christ are 'to the praise of God's glory,' Eph. 1:12, so those that distrust him are to the dishonour of his name.

1. It is the greatest reproach and undervaluing of God. He calls it a wearying of him more than other sins: Isa. 7:13, 'Will you weary my God also?' The sin of Ahaz, upon which this speech was uttered, was a distrust of God, not properly this unbelief we are speaking of. God had declared his intent to preserve Judah against the invasion of the Syrian, and to defeat the counsels of the league against them. To strengthen Ahaz his belief in the promises, he commands him to ask a sign as a seal of this assurance, and gives him the choice of what sign he pleased; wisheth him to put his power to the utmost trial, either in heaven or earth: ver. 11, 'Ask it either in the depth or in the height above.' Judgments against the enemies, from the bowels of the deep to the windows of heaven. And as he gives him liberty to employ his power, so he assures him of the tenderness of his mercy: ver. 11, 'Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God;' though thou hast been so wicked an idolater, if thou wilt repent, confide in me, walk according to my will, I will be a God in covenant with thee, I will be a God to preserve thee, and a God to judge thine enemies; thy Jehovah in being their Elohim, and manifesting my power for thee against them. Ahaz his answer seems to be a start of a modest humility, though indeed it was disobedience not to do as God commanded him: ver. 12, 'And Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord;' he would not tempt God, or as some read the word אנסה, I will not exalt God; the words import, I will not trust God, I will send to the king of Assyria, who can better save me than the Lord. As he did, 2 Kings 16:7. I will fortify my cities, train my soldiers, crave assistance of my neighbours. Observe, though God, in his message to

him, offered himself to be his God in covenant with him, Ahaz would not accept of the proffer, owns him not as his God in his answer, 'I will not tempt the Lord;' not, I will not tempt my God, which had been an argument of his trust, and so had altered the tenor of his answer to an humble resignation. Ahaz would not be beholden to God, he would not honour God so much as to give him an opportunity to glorify his great power; if we read the words, 'I will not exalt the Lord.' Upon this God promiseth a sign, ver. 14, that 'a virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and call his name Emmanuel,' and this should be a sign. I will not discourse how this was to be a sign to Ahaz, or the body of the people then in being; but take notice, every unbeliever is an Ahaz, reproacheth the kindest offers of God. God calls to men to turn to him, to place their whole confidence in him; but men reject the offer, run to creatures, and thus weary God. If it was so great a scorn of God, not to accept his proffer for a temporal deliverance, not to regard any sign from him, how great is it not to regard the sign of his greatest power, wisdom, and love, which he hath manifested in that Son born of a virgin, who is Emmanuel, God with us! An unbeliever is such a scorner of God, that he is not willing that that dirt he hath cast in the face of God by his other sins should be wiped off; not willing to sanctify that name by believing, which he hath profaned by other sins against the law; will not embrace that Christ which God offers him, whereby he may in some sense render him a satisfaction for all the wrongs God hath sustained by him. As faith 'gives glory to God,' Rom. 4:20, so unbelief casts reproach and scorn upon him.

2. It robs God of the honour of all his attributes. He that believes not God, doth fling dirt in the face of all those attributes which were illustrious in the work of redemption: of his wisdom which contrived it, of his righteousness which executed it, of his mercy which is infinitely commended by it, of his truth which is engaged to make good the intent and purchase of it to every one that believes. Either men believe not that God will perform what he saith, and then it is an injury to his truth; or they hope for salvation by some other means, and then it is a contempt of his wisdom; or that the things proposed

by him are not amiable and desirable, and then it is a reproach to his goodness; or they trust to some creature helps against his command, and then it is a disobedience to his sovereign authority, or they think him not able to effect the things he hath promised, and then it is a disparaging his power and sufficiency. Whatsoever attribute in God is a ground of, or an encouragement to, faith, is struck at by unbelief. The grounds and encouragements of faith are these: God is infinitely wise, and cannot be deceived; he is infinitely true, and cannot deceive his creature in declaring what is false; he is infinitely good, and will not deceive his creature, for deceit is most opposite to love and goodness; he is infinitely happy, and hath no reason to deceive his creature, which could not add to his happiness; whereas deceit among men sometimes improves their interest, but deceit in God would dissolve the Deity; he is infinitely powerful, and well able to make good what he asserts, to confer what he promiseth, inflict what he threatens. As all these are indisputable grounds of faith, and are owned and honoured by it, so they are blemished in their reputation by unbelief, and marked with a base alloy; they are all foolishly charged by it, and made the common scoff of it. There is not an attribute but may draw up a particular indictment against an unbeliever, for an offence against its crown and dignity. And as there was not an attribute but God intended to glorify in Christ, so there is not one but this sin doth really vilify.

3. It is an undeifying of God, as much as lies within the compass of a creature's power. He that denies any one attribute of God, seems to deny God himself, to ungod him, strips him of the glory of a deity. Take but one pin, necessary to the frame of a watch, and you take away the perfection of it. Those attributes which unbelief stabs, are essential to the being of a deity. God can no more be a God without them, than the sun can be a sun without light, or any of us men without a rational soul. Unbelief is not so indulgent as to divest God of the honour of one perfection, but of many; nor so mild as absolute atheism, which denies the being of a God. It is a less scorn to deny that ever there was such a man as Cæsar, than to affirm indeed there was such a person, but he was a fool, coward, false, cruel, and the

vilest man that lived: it is better to deny his being, than to count him infamous. Unbelief strips God of his richest robes, his highest virtues,* which were more singularly glorified in redemption, than they were in the creation, or could be in the creation of innumerable worlds, more glorious than this without the death of his Son for them. Not to acknowledge God in Christ, is to deny him that glory that the creation and common providence cannot afford him. As our Saviour was tormented by the Jews in every part of his body,—head with thorns, face with spittle, hands and feet with nails, and wholly with reproaches in what was dearest to him,—so is God dishonoured by unbelief in every perfection. As their actions denied Christ to be the Saviour of the world, so the acts of this sin deny God to be the God of the world.

4. It strikes at all the three persons. As all have an hand in the salvation wrought by Christ, so the rejecting that redemption dashes a blot upon all. They all sat in joint consultation about man's redemption; they were joint in counsel, joint in publication of it; the Father in his first promise to Adam, and in a voice at Christ's baptism; Christ in his person, and the Holy Ghost bearing witness by the gifts conferred upon men after the ascension of Christ, which was a testimony of his glorious entertainment: Acts 5:31, 32, 'And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, which God hath given to them that obey him.' The Father sends, Christ dies, the Spirit offers to apply; the neglect of this is against the wisest counsel, the greatest persons in being. The Spirit was the great witness after the ascension of Christ, by the collation of eminent gifts, whereby a divine approbation was given to the doctrine of Christ from heaven. He revealed nothing but what Christ had before done, and wrought, and built upon that foundation, John 16:14, he glorifies Christ, for he receives of his. He discovers the eternal counsels of God, the depths of divine wisdom, which 'the heart of man could not conceive,' 1 Cor. 2:9, 10; The Father bears witness to Christ by undeniable miracles; the Spirit adds his testimony by internal operations, and urging the truths of Christ upon the hearts of men; Christ bears witness to himself by his obedience and death.

So then, any slight of Christ is a slight of the Father and the Holy Ghost.

But particularly,

First, It blemisheth the truth and veracity of God. He that believes 'sets to his seal that God is true,' John 3:33, i.e. he approves and declares solemnly the truth of that revelation God hath made.† Men fix their seals to contracts to ratify them; faith is as the subscription to the word of God, protesting that what God speaks is true. And it is the highest glory a creature can give to the Creator, to acknowledge him a God of eternal and immutable verity. Since Christ, 'whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God, ver. 34, since what he declares is not simply his own, but the instructions of his Father; the acknowledging those declarations to be true, is an acknowledging the truth of God in Christ. Now, as the true believer glorifies not only the truth of the Son, but of the Father, so the unbeliever outrageth not simply Christ, but God the Father, whose counsels and commands are published by him. As assent is a justifying God, as the people and the publicans, by assenting to the truth John Baptist declared, are said to do, Luke 7:39, so a dissent is casting an aspersion of falsity on God. In common sense, when we say we believe not a man, we declare him to be false; and no better a title than that of a liar doth this sin give to God: 1 John 5:10, 'He that believes not God, hath made him a liar, because he believes not that record that God gave of his Son.' It is as certain that he gives the lie to God, as it is certain God cannot speak a lie to him. Thus men write deceit upon the promises when they do not believe them: 'Though I have redeemed them, yet have they spoken lies against me,' Hosea, 7:13; **דפא**, though I redeem them, though I have promised them redemption by Christ, yet they slander me as if I were the falsest person in the world. We bely God when we believe not his threatenings, and promise ourselves impunity under sin: Jer. 5:12, 'They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us;' as if his promises were like the picture of a sun, without heat and light; his threatenings like the sound of pot-guns, as if the one were toys,

and the other bugbears. This is to represent God a cozen and impostor, though he hath engaged his royal word; to make the whole Bible an heap of fallacies. The glory of a man is his credit; it is an honourable character, such a man is a man of his word; it is a disgraceful character of God to fancy the first truth guilty of lying; it is a title he hath joined with his honour as a Creator, that he 'keeps truth for ever,' not to part with it any more than with any other perfection, no more than with the title of Creator: Ps. 146:6, 'Which made heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that is therein, which keeps truth for ever.' These represent him with no truth to keep, or no heart to preserve it.

The guilt of it in this regard will appear,

First, It is in this respect a greater sin than despair. Despair is deservedly counted an horrid sin, a wrong to the mercy of God; but this is greater. Unbelief is against a divine good as it is in itself,* for as much as in us lies, we make God the author of a lie. Despair is opposed to a divine good as communicable to us, and therefore is a less wrong to God; despair questions not the stability of divine faithfulness in itself, but the communicableness of that good promised to the soul; but unbelief lays a battery against the divine nature. Despair acknowledgeth the truth in regard of the object, but doubteth in regard of the subject; they count the divine proclamation true, but think themselves without the compass of it.

Secondly, It strips God of the glory of his nature, who can as soon cease to be, as cease to be true. Some say that if God should appear in a human shape, light would be his body, and truth his soul; so essential is truth to the Deity, 'it is impossible for God to lie,' Heb. 6:18. If we fancy him a liar, we fancy him no God, because we represent him doing a thing impossible to the divine nature, changing an unchangeable goodness into a hateful unfaithfulness. What is his power, knowledge, sufficiency, if truth and faithfulness, the glory of all, be wanting? As sincerity is the beauty of all graces, so veracity and holiness is the lustre of all divine perfections. To give

the lie is incivility to an inferior, insolence to a superior, a kind of treason to a prince; yet this may be done without unmanning a man, or deposing a prince, but it cannot be done to God without degrading him to the condition of those lying vanities we trust to. It is, indeed, so heinous as that it puts upon God the character of the devil, who is called 'the father of lies,' as though God should be projecting nothing else from eternity (as the devil hath been from the time of his fall) but to mock and cozen the souls of his creatures into everlasting destruction. It is to count him worse than the devil, by how much they fancy him more powerful, but equally false. It is strange that a man who knows in some measure what God is, should be so insolent and blasphemous as virtually to charge him with a dissembling nature; yet so unbelievers do, though not in positive opinion, yet by interpretation and practice. And as they make God as bad, so they make themselves worse than the devil, who believes the truth of God, though he feels only the terror of it, and nothing of the comfort.

Thirdly, It makes God guilty of perjury. God hath not only obliged himself by his royal word, but his solemn oath, 'two immutable things,' Heb. 6:17, 18. His promise, considered alone, is of eternal verity; he is true and unchangeable; he doth not promise one thing and purpose another. To this he hath added his oath, to remove all controversy and doubt which may arise in the mind. Not to believe a man of an honest repute, when he swears the truth of a thing before a magistrate, is a gross uncharitableness, unless we certainly know, or have strong presumptions, that what he swears is false. How black is it then not to believe God speaking? how much blacker not to believe God swearing? As the oath of God, the calling all his perfections, his very being as a testimony to the truth of his assertion, is the highest ground of assurance that can be given, so the not believing it is the highest injury that can be offered to a God of truth. He annexeth his oath to his word for the encouragement of sinners to faith and repentance: Ezek. 33:11, 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' As I am an eternal, immortal being, so surely do I delight not in the death of a sinner, but in his conversion and life. How great a charge of perjury doth unbelief

bring against God, whose condescension hath been so infinitely wonderful as to give us his oath for a cure of our mistrust, to invite men to faith and repentance upon the security of his own eternal life and being!

Fourthly, It is aggravated from the clearness of the revelation. The higher the revelation is, the stronger arguments there are of the divine authority, and the greater contempt of the truth and authority of the person so revealing. If an angel should bring a message from heaven, what man would be jealous of the truth of it, when brought by so pure a creature? But this revelation was made by the Son of God, who lay 'in the bosom of the Father,' John 1:18, and is truth itself; to the propagation of which truth, neither the wit and eloquence, the strength and valour, the wealth and interest of the world can lay any claim. It hath appeared in the whole progress with a divine stamp in the forehead of it. The first declarations of it were laid in the sufferings of the publishers: Could such multitudes be thought to lose their lives, so dear to man, for a mere falsity? No man is so mad as to invent a fable, and to stand to it to the loss of his life, and whatsoever is of most account with him in the world. Would any affection to Christ have animated them to expose themselves to the sharpest sufferings, had they had but any jealousies that Christ was an impostor? No, they would rather have expressed their hatred than their love (who can love another for a gross abuse of him?) or had they been so extravagant as to be desirous to keep up the credit of their Master, would they for it have made themselves the public scorn and off-scouring of the world? It could not be covetousness or ambition, or any other lust, which could be the principle of their publication of Christianity; the little wealth they had, they forfeited for it. No ambition could build any hopes of worldly honours upon the doctrine of a crucified Christ. The Jews had lately crucified the Master, and were not like to honour the servants for a charge of murder against the Son of God. The Gentiles were not likely to receive it, and applaud them for it by any strength of nature. Ambitious men take rational courses for attaining honour; but this was against the rooted customs of the world, which are hardly parted

with; and contradicters of ancient religions use to be violently persecuted to death for the honour of their acknowledged gods. But had such principles excited them to a publication of this doctrine, surely they would gladly have desisted, after they had found their hopes without success, when they found blows instead of honours; or they would have armed the professing multitudes, and conquered countries; but they used not their swords against their enemies, but received the strokes of their enemies' swords into their own breasts, for the defence of the doctrine; and that not for a time, but during their whole lives. Not one sword was drawn in the defence of it by any votary to it. They resisted no force used against them, though, by reason of their multitude, they were capable of preserving themselves, and of offending their enemies. Their discipline was strict, the maxims of their doctrines were advantageous to mankind; they thwarted no moral precepts that were amiable by the light of nature, but highly advanced them; there could not be a way of publishing it more clear and full, to manifest it to be the truth and doctrine of God, than this. Had it been uttered by the voices of angels in the air, we might have suspected them to be impure devils as soon as holy angels. When the way of the revelation of the gospel hath been altogether divine, without any taint of worldly means for the propagation of it, the not believing it, the not complying with the precepts and promises of it, is an high contempt of divine truth.

Fifthly, It is aggravated from the performance of God's gospel promises. It is a great sin not to believe the truth of God when it is declared, but a greater not to believe it when it hath been made good. It is not only a word, but 'a tried word, as silver tried in the fire,' which hath been found to be good and sound metal, and free from all mixture of baser metals, as lead or tin, with it, Ps. 18:30. 'The word of the Lord is tried,' Ps. 12:6, and there have been experiences of this in all ages. Not one among all those multitudes that have sincerely professed him, could charge him with falsity. God hath given the highest evidence of his veracity in making good the promises of assistance to our mediator in the exercise of his office. The promises were made to him as mediator and undertaker of that great work of

suffering for us. The performance, therefore, of them to Christ is a manifestation of God's truth to us; for though Christ was the immediate subject of those promises, yet God's glory in our good was the ultimate intendment of them; and what was promised and performed in the head, is influential upon all the members, and is the main ground of faith, and so proposed in Scripture. The resurrection of Christ is everywhere set out as the strong foundation of faith in him. God carried him through the gulf to a glorious immortality. Since, therefore, God hath performed the greatest promises, wherein his power could be engaged (for his power and truth were then tried in the highest manner), it is a great disparagement to him to distrust his truth in those things which require less power to effect them, after so great an experiment of his faithfulness. Unbelief denies that truth is crowned with a rich performance.

Again, This sin would frustrate the truth of God in the promises remaining to be fulfilled by Christ, or but in part fulfilled. God promised him a seed, a generation to serve him. This was an article in the covenant of redemption, as the great encouragement of Christ to undertake that work. If all were of the unbeliever's mind, would not the truth of this promise lie in the dust? Every unbeliever would have it so. He is a child of the devil, and like him envies God a glory, the glory of his truth and power; and, like Ahaz, Isa. 7:12, 'I will not exalt the Lord,' if the word tempt may be so read, as some read it.

The power of God was the chief ground of faith in the promise in Abraham's time, Rom. 4:21; but since the performance, not only the power of God, which he had given an evidence of in the creation, but the truth of God, whereof he had given an evidence in Christ; and in this sense the fathers' not knowing God by the name Jehovah is meant, Exod. 6:3. They did know God by that name; for Abraham calls the mount Moriah so, Gen. 22:14. But they knew him not by that name in regard to the faithfulness and truth of God, which that name signifies. As the unbelief of the Jews, after the deliverance from Egypt, where God had manifested himself Jehovah, was greater

than before, so it is greater now, because it is against the highest manifestations of God as Jehovah, in accomplishing his promise in the assistance of Christ, and bringing forth the mediation promised.

Sixthly, This is aggravated from our believing creatures before God, whereby we lessen the esteem of his truth below that of a creature. Have not we many times trusted the honesty of man, who in his best estate is vanity, and given him credit for many pounds? Not to believe the great promise of God in Christ, wherein he hath made himself in a sort our debtor, is to debase the credit of the unerring God below that of a mutable mortal. How corrupted is that nature that will believe man, a wicked man, a lying man, rather than God, who is under so many obligations of promises to make good his word; nay, believe man's falsities before God's verities? Do not men believe often the vain predictions of men, and their promises of help and furtherance of business of concern, and receive them with more gladness and confidence than ever we received the clear promises of the gospel? The credit of God, that cannot lie, is of less value with men, and hath a lighter influence upon them, than the word of a deceivable creature. What a reproach to God is it for a man to give no credit to his word, sealed by the blood of his Son, and confirmed by various repetitions, and yet will trust an inconstant element with thousands, which may be lost by the fury of winds and waves? A patent of an earthly honour from a temporal prince is highly valued, when the great gospel charter, where the truth of God is engaged for security, is slighted, the highest faithfulness not esteemed worth the crediting. When God is not believed, we must needs give credit to the devil; if we believe not Christ, we believe the devil, there being but those two heads, one by God's authority, the other by his own usurpation: Unbelief, then, changeth the devil into a god, a liar from the beginning into truth, and the truth of God into a lie, and the God of truth into a liar; it prefers the dictate of the devil, and so owns the faithfulness of the devil above the faithfulness of God.

Seventhly, It is the greater contempt, because God doth highly value his truth, yea, above all his name: Ps. 138:2, "Thou hast magnified thy

word above all thy name.' Whatsoever of God's name should drop to the ground, this shall remain glorious in all successions of ages; it shall stand firmer than the ordinances of heaven, without the staggering of one iota or tittle of it. Nothing is so dear to God as his truth; he will fold up the heavens like a garment, and crumble the earth to dust, before one tittle of his word, of his gospel as well as his law, shall vanish and pass away, Mat. 5:18. God values the promises of the gospel no less than the precepts and threatenings of the law; his truth hath an interest with his love in the one, as well as with his authority and justice in the other. The wrong is greater to us when we are struck through the sides of that which is most precious in our esteem. This sin, therefore, as being against the truth of God, is odious to him. As it is irrational not to love the chiefest goodness, so it is irrational not to believe the supreme truth. No man but disesteems another that will not take his word, when yet himself knows he is a mutable creature. How much greater is the offence against the God of unchangeable faithfulness, to put the lie upon him by not believing those truths he hath so solemnly proclaimed and miraculously confirmed? Has not the eternal truth reason to be offended with men for not believing him, when he promiseth and swears too? It is strange that if God had a deceitful and dissembling nature, he should discover it at no less expense than the royal blood of heaven, and not deceive men without such solicitous entreaties of them to believe in him through his Son. To count a man a liar is to stop all passages to a conversation with him; to conceive of God under such a notion is not only to deny any commerce with him ourselves, but to count all foolish that address to him or are willing to believe him.

Secondly, It casts a black aspersion upon the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God appears not singly in the gospel, but with admirable variety of mysteries and contrivance, Eph. 3:10, 'manifold wisdom of God,' a depth of counsel in the forming it, a glorious contexture of means for the completing it, wisdom in the drawing out the glory of his grace from the rubbish of sin, in breaking the neck of the devil's designs, by those means whereby he wrought our ruin, even by the

human nature, in bringing about man's redemption by the disgrace, infirmities, weakness of human nature, means seeming contrary to so glorious an end; the admirable uniting justice and mercy in one point, reducing them to one end with an entire consent, the manifestation of the highest hatred of sin, and the choicest love to the sinner by one and the same act; all these are treasures of wisdom opened in Christ. His wisdom is more glorious in the contriving redemption than in laying the platform and model of creation. That God might create millions of worlds is obvious to the conceptions of men that understand him to be omnipotent, and give more sparkling evidences of his wisdom in the fabric. But how he should make justice and mercy conspire together with a joint consent, and save the honour of all his attributes in the recovery of guilty man, is an abyss of wisdom which transcends the conceptions of men and angels till it be revealed, and after the discovery most needs leave them in eternal astonishment. This must be no inconsiderable affair, which is the object of the highest wisdom in the Deity.

Now, unbelief chargeth God either,

1. With folly in regard of the unnecessariness of it. If men think they have ability to save themselves (as all justiciaries and fondlers of their own righteousness virtually imagine), what a needless work was this in God, to make his Son a sacrifice for man's salvation! No wise man would spend his time to contrive a way to make birds to fly, which have both wings and a power to exercise them to that purpose, or to make cork to swim, which hath an aptitude because of its sponginess. What is the secret ground of the rejecting Christ, but a conceit in man that he hath a power to save himself without him? For since salvation is highly desirable, if we will not accept it from another upon his terms, we imply we can attain it by our own power. What is the language of this, but that God busied himself to no purpose, and was employed from eternity in a needless affair, which is a most unworthy reflection upon God and Christ; since God, being infinitely wise, he would not have purposed it, and Christ, being the wisdom of God, would not have debased himself to death, had it not

been for the highest concern both to God and man. It had been inconsistent with the wisdom of both, the one to purpose, the other to undertake, such a task, but for the most weighty necessity and the most advantageous benefit. It was the will of God that Christ should take a body for our sanctification: Heb. 10:10, 'By the which will we are sanctified' (i.e. by the will of God which Christ came in his body to perform) 'through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.' What doth unbelief but blot out the characters of God's wisdom, the orders of his will, accounting it unnecessary for God either to prepare Christ a suffering body, or for Christ to offer up himself to God in it? It imputes the rejoicing of Christ at this body to an ignorance and folly in him, as if it were a folly in God to command it, and a folly in Christ to obey such a command, a fruitless design and an unnecessary employment. Unbelief indeed is nothing else but a cavil with the judgment and reason of God. Upon this score the apostle chargeth the incredulity of the gentiles; they counted the gospel foolishness; the choicest mysteries of divine skill were of no better repute with them than the nonsense of fools and the extravagancies of madmen: 1 Cor. 1:23, 'Unto the Greeks foolishness.'

2. Or, if men do account the coming of Christ necessary, and so free God from the charge of folly, they at least charge his wisdom with a mistake in the means of salvation, as if it were undertaken without precedent consideration. Either Christ hath sufficiently performed his office or not; if he hath, why is he not accepted by faith? If he be not accepted, there is a tacit imputation in the refusal of believing that the wisdom of God was defective in the person he appointed, that God was frustrated in his expectations, that he pitched upon a weak and unworthy person, unfit for so great an honour, and unable for so vast a weight. Hereby they impair the credit of Christ and prudence of God. It must be an act of wisdom to entrust Christ with the weight of all his glory, since God can no more be deceived himself than he can deceive his creature. But doth that man think it so, that will not trust Christ with his soul according to those terms upon which he is offered? Doth he not reproach God of weakness by a refusal to imitate him, and deposit the concerns of his soul in the

same hands wherein God hath trusted the honour of all his excellent perfections? If God depended upon Christ for his richest glory (for where there is a trust reposed there is a kind of dependence upon that person upon whom the trust is devolved), doth not that man count himself wiser than God, that will not depend upon Christ for the chiefest happiness? He cannot possibly be freed from the guilt of accusing God of an high imprudence, who will not believe in and trust that person to whom God hath given credit for all his glory; that thinks not Christ fit to be trusted by him, who hath been trusted by God with that which is of more value than the salvation of thousands of worlds, and by this ascribes a greater wisdom to his own reason and understanding than he will acknowledge in God's, when he seeth no comeliness in him in whom the wisdom of God beheld the greatest beauty and a fulness of grace and truth; when that which is gold in God's eye is dirt in his, and that which is dirt in God's eye is gold in his.

3. By this sin the unbeliever doth, as much as in him lies, frustrate the design of God's glorious wisdom, in not consenting to that which the wisdom of God hath contrived. The wisdom of a man, as also the wisdom of God, lies in choosing the end and suiting the means. When we approve not of the one or contradict the other, we deny the fruit of a man's wisdom to him. In this case we do the like to God, when we neglect the end of his wisdom, salvation, and reject Christ, the means and way to it; it is to defeat his design, and tread under our feet the whole scheme of his counsel; for if all men were of the same mind, God would have discovered himself to be an all-wise God in redemption to no purpose. As faith is a justification of God in his counsel, so is unbelief a condemnation of God's counsel, and rendering it vain: Luke 7:29, 30, 'They rejected the counsel of God in themselves.' It is spoken of the pharisees' not being baptised by John Baptist. They did not publicly contemn it, but their non-compliance with it was a rejecting immediately the doctrine and baptism of John, and ultimately the counsel of God. When God saw man sunk into misery by sin, and under an impossibility to recover himself, God in his boundless mercy and infinite wisdom contrived a way of

restoration, proposeth it to men, and acquaints them with his resolve how he would have men saved; when men refuse it, rebel against God's decree, they reproach his counsel as well as his goodness. The word ἀθετεῖν, there used, signifies not a simple refusal, but rejecting a thing with reproach, and a dissolution of it, a bringing it to nought; as the word is used by the Septuagint, Ps. 33:10, 'The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought.' As God brings the counsel of wicked men to nought, dissolves the whole frame of it, and makes their devices of no effect, so doth an unbeliever, as much as it is possible for him to do in himself, unravel the whole web of divine counsel, and would make it utterly insignificant. Against themselves; some render it in themselves, in their own thoughts by inward pride.

Well, then, consider how great a sin unbelief is in this regard.

Here is the wisdom of God making a match in heaven between the divinity and humanity,* Christ by the wisdom and will of God stripping himself and becoming a worm, that you may be as glorious as an angel. God might have employed his wisdom in contriving your ruin, but he sets it on work to build a scaffold for your salvation. Shall this wisdom be despised, which doth as far surpass the comprehensions of angels as the apprehensions of infants? When a scholar hath made a curious book, wherein he hath wrapped up all his learning, an artificer a beautiful watch, wherein he hath laid out all his skill, what a contempt of the learning of the one and art of the other is it to tear the book and break the watch! Oh how is the workmanship of God, which is admired by angels, dashed by unbelief! How is the unconceivable art of God blotted by the wilfulness of man! God may well say to us, Is the masterpiece of my counsel of so slight a value as not worth your consent? Have I caused the beams of my adorable wisdom to shine so bright in the gospel, to have no other return but a charge of folly? You see what blackness there is in the bowels of this sin.

Thirdly, It slights the goodness of God. Unbelief vilifies that which God designed to the praise and glory of his grace, and renders God

cruel to his own Son, in being an unnecessary shedder of his Son's blood. Unbelief consists either in presumption or despair. Presumption on his absolute mercy, which, while it seems to magnify, it doth slight the constituted methods of his declared goodness in Christ; and, in a relying upon an undiscovered kindness, impairs his sovereignty, by prescribing other ways of communicating himself to his creature than what he hath appointed; or despair, which represents God under the appearance of a cruel tyrant, glad of the destruction of his creature, and changeth infinite mercy into infinite fury; as if a great multitude of iniquities could throw mercy into the depths of the sea instead of being thrown by it; as if the clouds could dissolve the sun instead of being melted by him. Presumption turns mercy into carelessness, and despair into cruelty. Unbelief, in the general notion of it, casts a scorn before men and angels upon the unsearchable riches of grace; it would hew in pieces the throne of grace, and wipe off the blood of Christ wherewith the mercy-seat hath been sprinkled.

First, Thus it is a diabolical sin; a receiving the devil's accusations of God before God's declarations of himself. When the devil was a murderer, he was a liar, John 8:44; he belied God and murdered man. An unbeliever belies God's goodness and murders his own soul. He represented God an hard master, envying man a felicity belonging to him; an unbeliever comes nearest his nature: he slighted God's goodness in forming man; an unbeliever slights God's goodness in redeeming him. The one envied God the glory of his work, and the other envies God the glory of his grace.

Secondly, It is against absolute and sincere goodness. God can have no more addition to his perfections by redemption than he had by creation, but a more illustrious communication of them to his creatures. If he could have any real increase, he had not been the chiefest good, infinitely perfect. The sin might claim some excuse if God had any selfish aims, if his essential glory could have been made brighter by believing. But since he requires faith as a necessary disposition for receiving the communications of his favour, and what

he doth offer is an advantage to the offender, none to the offerer, to convey a goodness to us, but not to receive anything from us, it is an inexcusable contempt of sincere goodness, a hewing at that redemption which grew up like a tall cedar from the root of pure mercy, when God needed not have sent his Son to die, nor a messenger to entreat, but have mustered up an army of destroying judgments against sinners.

Thirdly, Against the highest goodness that ever appeared to the sons of men. No greater act of love could spring from boundless eternity, than the parting with his only delight in heaven out of his bosom for the redemption of man; so that he may well say, 'What could I have done more to my vineyard?' Isa. 5:4. Unbelief, then, is a reproach of that love which God designed to commend to the world in the mission of his Son; and therefore the ingratitude in refusing it is as unparalleled in the rank of sins, as the kindness it slights is in the rank of mercy. It is against a law more animated with love than any other dispensation of God was filled with. The giving his Son to die was the most stupendous evidence of his goodness, whence faith draws the highest encouragement, and unbelief contracts the most dismal aggravation; and the greater, since it is a contempt of a greater kindness to us than what was shewn to the ancient patriarchs, who only had a promise of the Messiah, when we have the performance; yet naturally we do as frowardly reject the thing performed, as they did heartily embrace the assurance of it. Christ is a gift, Rom. 5:16, a gift of love, John 3:16, the royallest gift of God, springing from unconceivable treasures of goodness. Is it a little sin to turn our backs upon the choicest gift that God can bestow, as though this pearl were of no more worth than a pebble? What really is the language of this scorn, but as if a man should blasphemously say in so many words, God might have kept his gift to himself, and never have troubled me with such a present?

Fourthly, A goodness ready to flow in upon us. The bosom of God is opened, the treasures of his goodness dispensed, the fountain of his grace running.* For men to be as deaf adders under such charms,

blind moles under such beams, is as great a wonder of wickedness as the mercy is a miracle of goodness. And when the tenders of grace are made with that affection and importunity, that love rides upon wings and meets us at every turn; when we cannot open the Scripture but we see a transcript of his heart as it breathed toward us from eternity, and view the deep counsels of God, and the transactions of old between the Trinity about man's redemption laid open; how great a sin is this, to scorn treasures not only stored up, but ready to be given out, with the most pressing arguments and strongest obligations to an acceptance!

Fifthly, And this perpetually. It is an everlasting goodness, a kindness firmer than the foundations of the earth, or the battlements of the heaven, which God offers; it is an 'everlasting mercy,' Isa. 54:7, like light in the sun that is never diminished, the element of fire never extinguished, water in the sea never emptied.

Sixthly, When we have absolute need of it. How inexcusable is the contempt, when rebels in chains trample under foot declarations of pardon! The necessity of the subject, as well as the excellency of the thing, and the unbounded goodness of the offerer; a necessity accompanied with an inevitable ruin without a leap into the arms of this goodness, still adds blackness to the refusal. How great a sin is it, then, to spurn at the beatings of God's heart, to account all the thoughts of mercy as if they had been thoughts of vanity, to spurn at that which angels wonder at and devils wish for? This is to treat unsearchable riches, bound up in Christ, as we would do the most loathsome dung. For God to find out this way, to offer his Son, to manifest such condescending grace as to entreat us to believe, and for us to make our excuses that we cannot come, to resolve not to handle the word of life, this, this is a sin of the deepest dye, this will at last silence the voice, of mercy, and rouse up a roaring fury. If we could unhinge the world, cast a blot upon the whole creation, raise a sedition of all creatures against God as Creator, dash in pieces the whole frame, consume it to ashes, that no relics of a God should appear in it, it could not be so high an indignity as the striking at his

bowels. What is the glory of creation but as a mite to that of redemption? What is the destruction of the world to the contempt of his Son, the demolishing the work of his hands to the spurning at that of his heart?

Fourthly, Or, it disparageth the power and sufficiency of God. Man is naturally apt to question God's power, as though he were unable to bring his word into act. God, therefore, doth preface his covenant with Abraham by the title of his almightiness: Gen. 17:1, 'I am God almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' All distrust grows up from a jealousy of weakness or wickedness in the object of it; either that a man is not honest and will not, or weak and cannot, perform. Unbelief, therefore, sometimes strips God of his power, and represents him impotent. It scantles almightiness according to the narrow apprehensions of the creature, as they, Ps. 78:41, who questioned whether that strength that had secured them in the Red Sea, and fed them in the wilderness, could conquer the possessors of Canaan and give them seisin of the country. As though that God who had bridled the waves could not as well fell down the Anakims, who breathed by his leave, as well as the waters moved by his providence. If there be a belief that God hath an intention to perform his promise, the diffidence doth arise then from a doubt of his omnipotence; if there be a belief of his veracity, there must be a jealousy of his ability. The apostle bottoms the faith of Abraham, whereby he believed he should have a son, upon the 'power of God,' Rom. 4:21. Unbelief is then sometimes bottomed upon a secret unworthy conceit of inability in God, as if he could not be as great as his word; as if he were, like the idols of men, without eyes to see and arms to relieve.

Indeed, all unbelief doth entrench upon God's power and sufficiency.

First, In not coming to him. It is a departure from God, not simply as God, but as a living God, Heb. 3:12,* a God that hath life in himself, and is able to communicate it to others; he departs from a spring to a puddle, and denies a fulness of life and satisfaction in that which he

departs from. Certainly unbelief, as it respects Christ, is a virtual denial of his deity; discards him from being the living God, from having a power and sufficiency to save, and as it is a sin against his divine person, is a wrong to the power, life, and sufficiency of God. He that runs from a prince that offers to protect him against his enemies, declares to all the world, that either the prince is not sincere in his offers, or unable to give him the protection he promiseth. All unbelief at least denies God the honour of his power, and doth depose him from the exercise of his saving omnipotence as to the unbeliever, and declares he can shift well enough with himself: 'He could not do any great work there because of their unbelief.' If all faith gives glory to the power of God, all unbelief vilifies it. If the power of God, as well as his faithfulness, be the object of faith in prayer (as it was of the faith of Christ: Heb. 5:7, 'He offered up prayers unto him that was able to save him'), then unbelief must needs strike at that which is the great ground and object of the grace which is contrary to it. An unbeliever thinks his soul safer in his own hands than in God's, and therefore will not commit it to his keeping. This is very visible in convinced souls before they come to Christ; how often do they cry out, Can God pardon? Can he remit? Are not my sins too great for him? Upon a diffidence of his power they are loath to lodge their souls in his arms; they cannot believe he hath an arm strong enough to cast a blot and dash upon all their sins,[†] as though a mighty rock could not bear up a bruised reed.

Secondly, In trusting to something else. Man is like a vine, he cannot subsist without some prop. A trust and faith he must have, if not in God, in something else, either in himself or abroad; he cannot depart from God, but he hath recourse to something else. Every motion hath a terminus ad quem, a term to which it tends. What then we trust unto, besides God and above God, we render in our thoughts more powerful than God. We cannot go to anything for relief with a neglect of God, but we depose the true God and create a new one; we acknowledge a greater fulness in some inferior good than in an eternal spring. A man's own righteousness, weak ordinances relied on with a neglect of faith in God upon his own terms, are as well

deified as the belly is made a god by a glutton, or money by a covetous person.

Thirdly, It receives an aggravation from the demonstrations of God's power exercised about Christ the object of faith. Unbelief is a contempt of all those attributes which were signally manifested about the effector of our redemption, whereof the power of God in assisting him in his whole course, and unloosing the bands of death, and setting him at his right hand, was none of the least glorified in our redemption, since the power of God in raising Christ is set forth to us as a ground of faith for the imputation of righteousness: Rom. 4:24, 'If we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' His doing the greater work in the resurrection of Christ, wherein infinite power was manifested, considering what a charge of imputed guilt Christ lay under, is an evidence of his ability to do that which is less. Since it is thus, unbelief is a reflection upon this power of God, depriving it of the due glory which belongs to it. God hereby shewed himself willing to be our God upon our faith, as he shewed himself the God of Israel in bringing them out of Egypt; and doth frequently, upon their incredulity and murmuring, mind them of his power manifested in that deliverance, as if in all their infidelity and unbelief they did unworthily reflect upon the glory of his strength in that work. And, certainly, since we are commanded to believe in him who by the power of God raised the dead to life, restored sight to the blind, conquered the legions of hell; who hath done things impossible to be acted by the strength of men or angels; one that hath made the power of princes and the wisdom of the world to bend to him, and lie prostrate before him, and come under his footstool; the not believing in Christ is a denial and contempt of all this power, or a tacit ascribing those acts to some occult causes rather than the power of God. This is the language of unbelief. If those things were acted by the power of God, why do we not firmly, really believe, and act according to such a faith? If we do not, it is evident that we do not think such things were acted, or that the power of God was engaged in them. What an unworthy charge is this upon God, when we will believe man, who is able to do nothing without God, and will not

believe in God, who hath manifested himself able to do all things by his own arm, without any partner?

Fifthly, It strikes at the sovereignty and authority of God. It is a debt we owe, as subjects, to God as our sovereign, to give credit to what he doth reveal, and to obey what he doth command. There is not only a revelation to encourage faith, but a command to enjoin it, 1 John 3:23. If men believe not, they pretend some reason for their unbelief. Whatsoever any man's reason is, it deposeth God from the sovereignty in his soul; because it hath a greater power over him to cause him to refuse God, than God's word and command hath to make him accept his Son. He that comes not for shelter, recovery, and protection to that head God hath exalted, disowns the authority as well as the wisdom of that person who constituted him in that office and dignity. Since Christ is enthroned by God, and 'exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour,' Acts 5:31, and acts in it as vicarius Dei, God's vicegerent, he that refuseth to be gathered under his wing casts a contempt not only upon the person of Christ, but the authority of God, who fixed him in his royalty. Murder is a defacing the created image of God, unbelief is a contempt of the natural image of God, a treason against the Head of the redeemed world. It implies either a supremacy over God, or an equality with him; either that he hath not power to make a revelation, a law, or to enjoin a belief of it and obedience to it.

First, It is a contradiction to the resolute and fixed will of God. All unbelief is a dislike of God's terms, Rom. 10:3, a non-submission to the righteousness of God, affecting a power of choice ourselves, debasing the royal authority to our demands, and that not to the demands of our reason, but of our lust. It is to make the Lord of glory kiss the sceptre of our wills, and his sheaf bow down to ours. We would be blotting out what articles he hath drawn, and putting in what conditions we please, when we consent not to what he proposeth, and submit not to what he commands. Is not this to pull down his colours, and set up our own? It is not a simple disobedience, but an evasion of his authority, not to acquiesce in and

comply with his conditions, imposing our own upon him, and indenting with him. We will have so much of Christ, and so much of our own righteousness to join with him. Other sins are against his sovereignty as a creator and a lawgiver, this against his sovereignty in a merciful design to reduce his creature to its happiness as well as duty. This sin therefore implies a denial of God's dominion, or having anything to do with his creature. It opposeth the return of the soul under his sceptre, and would keep man at an irreconcilable distance from God. How malicious would this contradiction be, if our redemption had proceeded from some other hand! Such an efflux of goodness, in restoring from slavery upon such light conditions, would have deserved from us an entire subjection. Such a mercy had merited an absolute sovereignty. How much more malicious is it against God, who besides the authority merited by this mercy, has naturally an absolute supremacy over us!

Secondly, It is an imitation of Adam's rebellion against God, in being a god to ourselves, or choosing another. God will have the soul of man in a state of dependence on him; it cannot be otherwise, unless man were a god. To make an independent creature is a contradiction, for that is to make him a god. Adam's sin seemed to be an affecting an equality with God, to be God's companion and equal in knowledge, which would infer an equality in everything else: Gen. 3:5, 'You shall be as gods,' or Elohim, 'as God'; not as the angels, for God interprets it an affectation of equality with himself in the ironical speech, ver. 22, 'The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.' Unbelief would still keep up this independency which Adam aimed at, and whereby he quenched his own happiness and that of his posterity, and attempts a salvation by his own righteousness, which God denied him when he drove him out of paradise, that he might not invade the tree of life, after the new covenant made with him of faith in Christ, and so have any hope to attain eternal life by any other means than what God had proposed. This sin is an approbation of Adam's act, in an imitation of it. Pride against God doth as necessarily attend unbelief now as it did then. Unbelief was the first sin, and pride was the first-born of it. Adam

first cast away his belief of the precept, and flung away humility at the heels of it.

Thirdly, Unbelief renders God, as much as in it lies, unworthy of any sovereignty. It doth not only deny his authority, but it represents him as false, foolish, careless, cruel to his own Son, and strips him of the honour of his truth, the glory of his wisdom, the designs of his grace, the arm of his power; and so represents him unworthy of obedience from the unbeliever himself or from any else. For who can be obliged in reason to obey a God so coloured as unbelief represents him, one that is not to be credited, that is mistaken in his contrivances, that hath no thoughts of goodness, that is too weak to protect his creature? Nay, God himself would not judge himself fit to be obeyed, if he were any of those which this sin would fasten upon him, since all the perfections in God which are abused by it are declared in Scripture as inducements to obedience; and God makes appeals to the reason of men to judge of his faithfulness, righteousness, wisdom, and goodness in them. To call a prince a fool is by the law of some countries made high treason, because such language concludes the prince incapable of government. The wiser heathens looked upon the fabulous gods of the vulgar, being represented vicious, unworthy of any acknowledgment, and ridiculous deities. Unbelief renders God ridiculous to the world, and more among us than among the heathens, who have absolutely denied Christ to be the Redeemer and Son of God; for they own not the revelation from God, and therefore cast not that imputation upon him, as the practical infidelity of those that believe it to be God's revelation doth; for they acknowledge it in a pretended opinion to be the revelation of God, yet act as though there were nothing but falsity, folly, and unrighteousness in the whole design.

Sixthly, It affronts the holiness and righteousness of God. If the setting forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin was to declare his righteousness, Rom. 3:25, i.e. his holiness as well as his justice, what doth unbelief signify but that this act was unrighteous in God, that God was not holy and righteous in punishing his Son as our surety?

Continuance in a state of nature by unbelief, after the revelation of God's holiness in so eminent a manner, is an approbation of that sin Christ suffered to expiate, a preferring it before the imitation of God's holiness, so much glorified in the death of his Son; an affecting that which is the just object of God's disaffection, since God, in the highest manner that possible can be, yea more than in the damnation of the whole world, hath manifested his hatred of sin in the death of Christ. The keeping up notoriously gross practices, or unbelief, though attended with morality, is a valuing a state of nature, against which God hath manifested his hatred; and therefore unbelief, after the declaration of Christ, draws a greater guilt upon a man than all sins before the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the declarations of the gospel.

Seventhly, It is a stripping God, as much as lies in man, of all his delight. The service Christ did, which was delightful to God, is contemptible to an unbeliever. God's delight and his stand in direct opposition; it is a representing God cruel to the object of his delight; it makes God a murderer of his Son; it taxeth him with the greatest act of cruelty in sacrificing his obedient Son, the object of his delight, and renders that act of God, which was the greatest pity to sinners and the glory of his mercy wherein he rejoiceth, not only a vain and a fruitless, but a tyrannical execution.

First, It is a refusal of Christ, the 'man that is God's fellow,' Zech. 13:2, his 'daily delight,' Prov. 8; it is contrary to that which is most dear to God, slights that which is most precious in his esteem. It was all God's aim in all his actions in the world, ever since the first promise, to magnify himself in his Son. The revelation of his righteousness in and through him, and the compliance of men with it, was the chief end of God in the manifestation of Christ to the world. The conversions of men to him are his pleasure: Isa. 53:10, 'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' What, then, is this sin, but a thwarting God in his main end; robbing him of the fruit of his counsel, the incomes of his love; making him a loser by his grace; depriving him of a joy in his works, by slighting Christ,

who is the centre of his delight, the joy of his heart, the top of his glory; chasing away all gladness from his soul, that he should have no pleasure in that which he hath contrived with so much wisdom, effected with so much power, but have an eternal grief in the miscarriage of his work? It is true this cannot be actually done; the counsel of the Lord stands firm, the delight of God is above the injuries of men; but this is in the nature of unbelief; and if this sin should have reigned in Adam, and every branch of him, from the beginning of the world to the last man born upon the earth, would not this be the effect of it? Therefore every unbeliever, as to his part, doth that which would really be the issue if all the sons of Adam were in his state. It frustrates the expectation of God, because God, in sending Christ, had an expectation that men would lay down their arms, accept of peace, reverence his Son, and manifest a joy in the reception of him suitable to the joy of God in his mission: Mat. 21:37, 'But last of all he sent his son, saying, they will reverence my son.'

Secondly, It is a privation of faith, a grace so pleasing to God. Next to the delight God hath in Christ, because of the glory accruing to him by it, he hath a delight in faith, because it owns the glory of God in the redemption by his Son, and honours those attributes in a peculiar manner which were eminent in it. Is there any grace he is more pleased with than faith? Is there any grace he hath put such a dignity upon? It is called a justifying faith, Rom. 5:1, a kind of an incommunicable attribute of it; other graces are the attendants, this the mistress. God is so infinitely pleased with it, as it stands in relation to the object, Christ crucified, that upon the appearance of it with a Christ lifted up in its hands, God blots out all the sins that stand upon record, accounts the soul righteous, opens his arms to embrace it, and seems to own it as a recompence for all the wrong he hath sustained. And what a delight it is to Christ I shall have occasion to shew afterward. The soul that draws back by unbelief affords God no pleasure: Heb. 10:38, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' It deprives God of all pleasure in his creature; it disturbs the rest of God. This is spoken of those that were within the church, and made profession of Christianity.

Thirdly, As it is a refusal of his mercy in Christ. Because mercy is the perfection he delighted to manifest in Christ, Micah 7:18, it bars all communications of it to such a soul, because he hath linked his mercy only to faith in Christ, where the gospel is revealed. So that when Christ is not believed in, the unbeliever, as far as in his power, frustrates the end of God in sending Christ, deprives him of that delightful glory he intended by his Son's death, makes void the merciful contrivance of God from eternity, which was the stupefaction of angels, the envy of devils, the expectation of the ancient fathers, and the satisfaction of believers, and, above all, the delight and glory of God. So that you see what a vast injury unbelief offers to God.

Secondly, It is a sin peculiarly against Christ. It is a piercing him again, Zech 12:10. Some think this prophecy respects, as to the time, the day of judgment; others, the time of Christ's being upon the cross. It respects, I suppose, some time between. The prophet speaks of Christ's piercing as a thing past; and at the time of his passion, there was not such a mourning among the Jews as is here described; neither doth it respect the times of the day of judgment. The mourning, then, of the condemned world, shall not be from a spirit of grace and supplication, but from a spirit of horror and despair. The result will be, since those that had not an hand in the death of Christ's body are said here to pierce Christ, it must be understood of a piercing by unbelief, which is an approbation of the Jews' cruelty towards him. Any man is guilty of an act who doth approve an act, though he was not formally an agent in it. And indeed the Jews did not actually pierce him, but the hand of a Roman soldier; yet they are said to do it, because they consented to the act. It is a piercing of Christ.* An unbeliever is a Jew in his heart and life, though a Christian in profession; though he doth verbally acknowledge the coming of Christ, he doth really deny it. It is an unworthy usage of Christ; it is a using him, as he speaks of himself in the Psalms, as 'a worm and no man,' trampling upon him with more violence and contempt than they would upon a worm. The vilest man in the world never suffered so many reproaches as Christ hath suffered by

notional and practical incredulity since he went to heaven. Judas, that betrayed him, was never so much hated by the highest professor and sincerest Christian, as Christ betrayed by him is slighted by unbelief, as if he were set up for a sign to be spoken against. 'As his visage was marred more than any man's' while he was upon the earth, Isa. 52:14, so his glory is stained more than any man's since he went to heaven. The natural darkness of men is so thick, that instead of being dissipated by the light, as other darkness is, it is so obstinate, that it excludes all the divine brightness of Christ from the understanding and consciences of the most part of men.*John 1:5, 'The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.' It contemns by a desperate ingratitude the person of the Son of God, the truth of his word, the bowels of his love, the power of his miracles, the ministry of his death, the glory of his ascension, and the majesty of his offices; and accounts the whole history of the gospel no better than a narration of lies.

And though men never saw the person of Christ, yet they offer violence to it by slighting the marks of it he hath left in the world. As a man is guilty of treason by abusing the statue or image of the prince, by defacing his seal, though he never saw the person of the prince;† he violates his authority that regards it not, owns not any act of grace from him, though he never saw his face; so are men guilty of trampling on the blood of Christ when they count it as a trifle, and unprofitable for their salvation, though they never saw Christ, nor ever had any communion with him, Heb. 10:29, when they 'count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.'

First, It is a nullifying the work of his mediation and death. It denies him the honour of his meritorious passion, vilifies the glory of his mediation, from the first counsel to the last act, sheds his blood afresh, and pours it slightly upon the ground, and tramples that inestimable sacrifice like dirt under the feet. No sin doth so immediately oppose Christ as mediator. This is the great antichrist in the world; though this sin, among Christians at large, denies him not in his person, it doth in his offices. As faith puts a value upon the

priesthood of Christ, eyes his death as a perfect atonement, leans upon him as a sacrifice upon the cross, and an advocate in heaven; so unbelief, being contrary to this grace, undervalues all that faith esteems. It frustrates the end of his coming, which was to reduce us to God, from whom we had receded by unworthy jealousies of him.

First, It renders the design of his coming a vanity, when it receives not the fruits of it. As he that will not use the creatures for those ends for which God created them, that shuts his eyes against the sun, that stops his mouth wilfully against his appointed food, writes a vanity upon the creation of God; so he that doth not receive Christ upon those terms God offers him, and for those ends God sets him forth, writes vanity upon the whole work of redemption, and 'makes the grace of God to be in vain,' 2 Cor. 6:1. Neither the pains of Christ, the blood of Christ, nor the righteousness of Christ, attain their end in such a person, who offers to him the indignity of unbelief, and makes him 'spend his strength in vain and for nought,' Isa. 49:4. Some think it is Christ's complaint of the incredulity of the Jews, and it will extend to all men that make no account of the travail of his soul, his unwearied pains and bloody passion, whereby they argue him to be a fruitless and a needless mediator, working miracles and shedding his blood to no purpose; and fix themselves in a state, as if Christ had never died in respect of benefit, though not in regard of guilt.

Secondly, It is a vilifying the price of redemption;* accounting that blood wherein Christ was sanctified, demonstrated to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and for which he was absolved from guilt, and counted righteous before God, and advanced that he might save them that come unto God by him, a common, an inefficacious thing, Heb. 9:28.

Thirdly, Yea, a regarding it as the blood of a malefactor. It is impossible that an unbeliever can regard it only as the blood of an innocent man, that may cry for vengeance like Abel's, and be as weak as Abel's blood to purchase salvation for the soul. It is impossible that this, though bad enough, in denying the efficacy of his blood,

can only be the reflection; but he must needs regard it as the blood of the highest malefactor that ever yet was in the world. In not accepting it as the blood of God, he renders Christ more criminal than Judas, and chargeth him with a falsity in declaring himself to be the Son of God, and the mediator of the world. If Christ be the Son of God, and the mediator of the world, why is he not cordially owned to be so? If he be not accepted heartily under those notions, the refusal of him declares he is not the person and officer of God, as he affirmed himself to be, and so renders Christ, not only void of innocence, but guilty of the highest affront to the majesty of God. He that refuseth him, disowns his filiation, denies him to be the Son of God, sees not a glory in him 'as of the only begotten of the Father,' John 1:14; what faith the apostle asserts, † unbelief denies. An unbeliever implies the truth of what the Jews falsely writ to the synagogues after the death of Christ, that he was ἄθεος καὶ ἄνομος, an atheist.‡

Thus do all persons that think to attain salvation by any righteousness of their own. Whosoever thinks he is able to enrich himself with spiritual blessings, to weave a covering of his own righteousness, and make payments of his old debts by a heap of good works, despiseth Christ's payment, slights the righteousness of the God of heaven, abuseth that Saviour who came to knock off our bolts, heal our wounds, and clothe our souls. He that thinks to enter into heaven, and not by him, is a thief and a robber; he robs God of the honour of his own constitution, and Christ of the glory of his mediatory office, and the right of his purchase. And thus do all persons who walk contrary to the end of Christ's coming, who are enemies to that spiritual life Christ came to set up, and friends to that sensual life he came to pull down. Such may pretend friendship to his person, but are enemies to his cross, Philip. 3:18, 19; they defame the end of his suffering, as much as the Jews defamed him in it.

Secondly, It is a denying the love of Christ. It is a stab at his heart, an outrage of his tender bowels. He suffered willingly all those torments

which were inflicted on him, to remove from us the necessity of suffering, which sin had involved us in, had he not stepped in to take our burdens upon his own shoulders. If we will not believe in him, we deny those choice affections which engaged him in the undertaking, and were illustrious in the execution. It is as if we should think the covenant of grace more severe than that of works; as if Christ were our enemy rather than our Redeemer, and came rather to kindle a hell for our torment, than to quench hell for us by his blood; as if he came to suffer for our misery, and not for our happiness. Was there any need of his coming to make us more miserable than we were before? Did it consist with the goodness of God to expose his Son to suffering, to make the creature more wretched, since the misery we were sunk into was more than we were able to bear? If it were an act of love in Christ, why is he not embraced by the choicest and most affectionate faith? If he be not thus embraced, it clearly implies that you have no imagination of any affection in him, that he is rather a formidable person than an affectionate Saviour. It is as great a slight of his love, as if he should open heaven and make the proffers of the gospel from thence. If Christ should speak from heaven in an audible voice, and propound the gospel articles in the most affectionate strains, would not the contempt of it be judged by all men to be an ungrateful scorn of his love? He doth speak from heaven in his word, as really as he bled upon the cross in his person (Heb. 12:15, 'If we turn away from him that speaks from heaven'), and unbelief doth insolently abuse the riches of his unspeakable goodness, and slight the blood shed with an adorable love, without which the anger of God could not be appeased, nor the fire of hell, prepared for sinners, extinguished, without which the filthiness of the soul could not be cleansed, nor the glories of heaven opened. In despising this love, we despise all the fruits of it which the believer enjoys. Since Christ was so willing to offer up himself to death that we might be freed, and the power of the devil put to an end in us, the keeping up the power of the devil in its full strength, as unbelief doth, is a slighting the main kindness our great benefactor intended to bestow upon us.

Thirdly, It denies the wisdom of Christ. It chargeth him with folly and inconsiderateness, in undertaking a task that was not worth his pains, in suffering for the purchase of pardon and salvation, which might be gained without so much ado. What did Christ aim at in the shedding of his blood, but the appeasing of the wrath of God, sanctification of the souls of men, the opening the gates of heaven, which justice, provoked by sin, had barred against them? If men do not believe, certainly they have some conceits, that either these benefits are not desirable and worth the inquiring after, and labouring for, or that they may be procured by other means at an easier rate than faith in the blood of Christ. And is not this a charge of folly brought against Christ, who paid so dear for that, which they suppose they can have upon a cheaper account, and without being beholden to him? Thus some interpret that place, Isa. 42:19, 'Who is blind as my servant, or deaf as my messenger that I have sent? who is blind as the Lord's servant?' As if God should introduce the unbelieving Jews, charging Christ with blindness and folly, who is the wisdom of God, and regarding that as contemptible, which was honourable in God's account. And, indeed, it seems to be the true sense of the place, since all the foregoing part of the chapter is a proclaiming of Christ, who, ver. 1, is particularly called God's servant. An unbeliever injures the wisdom of Christ in not following his pattern; he trusted God upon his bare word, and oath, and promises of assistance in his work, and a good issue and success. He that will not give credit to the promise of God for salvation by Christ, implies that God is unworthy to be trusted, that his word is of no value, that all that trust him are unwise, and consequently that Christ himself, who exercised the greatest trust of any in the world, was the most unwise of any. When we follow not the practice of another, we imply some defect in the wisdom of that person we refuse to imitate. This is truly the language of unbelief; and the Gentiles at the first preaching of Christ were so besotted with their own imaginary wisdom, that they thought the preaching of the cross foolishness, and a mere extravagancy of man.

Fourthly, It wrongs the authority of Christ. It receives an aggravation from the greatness of the person that published the doctrine of faith. All laws are to be attended with a greater veneration, by how much the more eminent the wisdom and authority of the person is. It was the Son of God who died by the command and commission of the Father. It is the Son of God that hath left the command of faith upon record. It is the Son of God who is the object of that faith we are commanded to have and exercise. The not believing, therefore, is a crime of the highest nature, in denying all the authority derived to Christ from the Father. Upon this score Christ chargeth the unbelieving Jews: John 5:43, 'I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not;' you have evident marks of a divine authority in me;* but because my doctrine accords not with the interests of your ambition and imperious lusts, therefore you receive me not. 'If another shall come in his own name,' who shall flatter your ambition, and preserve the dominion of your beloved lusts, 'him you will receive.' Thus is the authority of Christ slighted by this sin, when the terms upon which he offers himself are disliked, when we would bring down Christ from his throne, to condescend to the conditions we would impose upon him; when we set the crown upon the head of some darling sin, which we should set upon the head of Christ.

Fifthly, It denies the excellency of Christ. To work faith there is necessary, first, a clear proposal of the object, supported with such reasons and allurements that have a strength in themselves to work upon the mind. But unbelief denies any such attractives in the nature of the object presented, to move the will to the embracing of it; it sees more righteousness in a Barabbas, soul-murdering lusts, than in a soul-saving Redeemer, when all the labour, study, thoughts, are for the pleasures of sin, the satisfaction of self, the increase of profit, and men scarce let Christ have a thousandth part of the thoughts. If druff and swill be preferred before a pearl, it is because a swine sees no excellency in it. As faith 'counts all things dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,' Philip. 3:8; so unbelief accounts the person, offices, doctrine, and laws of Christ dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-dependence,

pleasing temptations, and gilded nothings. As faith accounts all things dross to Jesus Christ, so unbelief accounts Christ dross to self. How injurious is this to the worth of an heavenly object! to value a feather above a mountain of gold, a box of poison before a pearl of the greatest price, when nothing can come in competition with him, but what is infinitely inferior to him! This unbelief sees no glory, tastes no pleasure, conceives no fulness, in that which God hath furnished with an unconceivable glory, and rests in with an eternal delight; it represents Christ empty, whom God stored with a communicable fulness, a poor nothing who is a rich treasure; it esteems Christ, who is an overflowing fountain, as if he were no better than a broken cistern. It is most certain that, while God is not chiefly affected, whatsoever is in esteem above him is valued as more excellent than God; so when Christ is not trusted, but a creature hung upon as the object of reliance, that creature so received is more excellent in esteem than that Christ who is refused.

Sixthly, It denies the sufficiency of Christ: the greatness of his priesthood, the fulness of his satisfaction, the sufficiency of him as the Son of God to make a prevailing intercession, as if he had not a fulness of living waters to bestow, or not goodness enough to communicate them; as though he were too scanty to free us from all misery, and fill us with all felicity. Where no trust is reposed in him, it implies that no benefit can be expected from him. The satisfaction of Christ was more efficacious to take away sin and please God, than the sin of man had guilt to displease him, and of more value to outweigh the sins of the whole world, than they had weight to press man down to the lake of fire; because of the marriage between the divinity and the humanity, whereby that person, who was man, was infinite in regard of his divine nature. Faith owns the fulness of this satisfaction, pleads it to God, acquiesceth in it. What doth unbelief? It either thinks the satisfaction too short, or that a man hath no need of it, or that he hath some other invention to content the creditor; but the first is as likely as any else, for, since Abraham's faith respected the power of God, Rom. 4:21, unbelief questions the ability of God. The apostle, pressing the Jews with many arguments to make

them sensible of the ability of Christ to 'save them to the utmost,' Heb. 7:25, witnesseth that the secret sentiment in the heart of this sin is the insufficiency of the blood of Christ for this great end of salvation: that it is of no more efficacy to the purging away of sin than the blood of bulls and goats; nor can reach the soul any more than the waters of a river can purge the filthiness of the Spirit. This sin therefore receives a mighty aggravation from the dignity of Christ's person, whereby he was able to make a valuable satisfaction, and actually did so. It is a 'light esteem of the rock of salvation,' Deut. 32:15, שַׁעֲתוֹ of his Jesus who conducted them in the wilderness; as if the rock of God's salvation had no more strength than a feeble pebble. It disgraceth his power in the whole web of his design, as if his merit were not strong enough, his satisfaction full enough, to procure our discharge, but we must have something of our own to eke it out. The blood of Christ cries to us, we regard it not; it streams out fresh from his heart in the virtue of it, and flows through the pipes of the gospel in the offers of it, yet unbelief stops the ears against the voice, shuts the heart against the approach of it, as if the sacrifice of Christ were a sacrifice of no value. And since this sin denies the virtue of the sacrifice of the Son of God for the expiation of sin, the justification and sanctification of the soul, it would expose him to another death to make his blood efficacious; since there is no means imaginable for the attaining those ends but the death of the Son of God.

Seventhly, It denies Christ his right and reward. The restoration of souls is a part of his reward for his work: Isa. 53:11, 'He shall be satisfied with the travail of his soul;' God promised it to him. Unbelief would make Christ a loser, as well as God a liar; for, if this leprosy did totally overspread the hearts of every son of Adam, all the travail of Christ's soul would have been in the service of the devil. Christ would take the pains, and the devil have the harvest. What an injury is this, to steal Christ's reward from him, to bestow it upon his enemy; to gratify the destroyer, as though they envied the honour of the Redeemer! It is his glory to have a numerous posterity; when 'he was taken from prison and judgment, who shall declare his

generation?' Isa. 53:8. Generations, in Scripture, are put for a people or family: 'the generations of Adam,' 'the generations of Noah,' i.e. the posterity of Adam and Noah. It is the glory of Christ to have his dying body spring up into a multiplied seed: John 12:23, 24, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' How? In his dying, that he may bring forth much fruit, as ver. 24 intimates. The occasion of our Saviour's speech was the desire of some Greeks to see him, ver. 20, and, in his answer, he intimates that the conversion of the Gentiles after his death was part of his glory, and the end of his death was to draw a train of believing disciples to him, ver. 32. If the faith of men makes the thoughts of Christ's death pleasant, and the death itself glorious to him, unbelief doth in its nature snatch this honour from Christ, and would hale him down from heaven, to stake him in a humiliation-state for ever, to continue him the scorn and derision of men, which, as it is injustice in depriving him of his right, is also ingratitude to him, who hath done so much to make himself dear to men. If the hire of a labourer was to be given him the same day, and the sun was not to go down upon it, because he had 'set his heart upon it, and lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin unto thee,' Deut. 24:15; if the depriving a labourer of his hire, for a small time, is a sin God marks, how black is that sin in the eye of God, which hath not once, but often, defrauded Christ of the hire he laboured for, both in his life and death, and will not return the soul to him for whose welfare he travailed? What is this but to defeat him of the fruit of his sweat, pain, blood and death, to disappoint him of the satisfaction he hath set his heart upon; or, as it is in the Hebrew, lifted up his soul unto, has a vehement desire for? What made him bear up in his dreadful sufferings, but the joy and hopes of having a generation to serve him? It was to this purpose he did groan and bleed. But unbelief would have him an unattended Redeemer, a man of sorrows without a spark of joy, when it will not come to Christ that the soul might have life, and Christ might have glory.

Eighthly, It puts Christ to the greatest grief. His soul was never more deeply impressed with grief before the hour of his passion than when he saw men would not come to him that they might have life. That

his table was spread, and his invited guests would not accept of his feasts, did both grieve and incense him. When he gave his disciples so sharp a check, and calls them fools, it was not for their timorous and ungrateful forsaking him, but for their slowness of heart in believing, Luke 24:25. Not their leaving him in the hands of his enemies, or their present charging him with imposture, but their not giving credit to what was predicted of him by the prophets. It was not the buffets he received, the thorns whereby he smarted, the reproaches of his enemies, the wounds from the hands of the soldiers, which did so much damp his soul, as the unbelief of his disciples; he seemed not to be afflicted with them so much as with this. This seems as grievous to him as the wrath of his Father, not to be trusted, and to be charged with falsity. To be ungratefully dealt with is more bitter to a generous spirit than death. This grieved him before ever he came into the world, when he conducted the incredulous generation of the Israelites through the wilderness;* it may now grieve him more, since it is against more incomparable marks of his kindness. Is there any grace that Christ doth more earnestly inquire after than that of faith? If he finds it, he regards nothing else, John 9:35. When he had found him that was excommunicated by the pharisees, he saith, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' He inquires not after this poor man's zeal in defending him so strenuously before the council, vers. 30–33. 'Dost thou believe?' is the only question he asks him in order to his admission into his family. What other grace doth he admire in the centurion? Mat. 8:10. Humility, marching in the first rank, 'I am not worthy,' &c. seems more obvious to view. But Christ looks at the faith which gave birth to his humility. If faith be the grace on which he fixeth his eye with affection and delight, unbelief must be the object of his greatest grief as well as anger; it is a grieving him after God hath wiped tears from his eyes.

3. As unbelief is an injury to God, as it is a particular injury to Christ, so it is also a wrong to the Spirit of God. It slights the witness he bears by his common illuminations to the dignity of Christ and the truths of the gospel, and therefore when men refuse to yield

obedience to the terms of the gospel, they are said to 'resist the Holy Ghost,' Acts 7:51. It is a sin more against the Spirit of God than any; it is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, but the sin against the Holy Ghost may be without many other sins, as it was in the pharisees, who were free from many immoral vices, but it cannot be without this as the main ingredient. It is a sin more against the Spirit of God than any, because it is the peculiar office of the Spirit to receive of Christ's, and shew it to men, to declare of the things of Christ, to bring the truths of Christ to a remembrance, to convince men of the necessity of Christ and his righteousness. Unbelief crosseth all those purposes of the Holy Ghost, the end of his coming into the world, writes vanity and folly upon his mission, by not subscribing to his motions. As it reflects upon the Father for sending Christ, so it reflects both upon the Father and the Son for sending the Holy Ghost. The more honourable the messenger is, the more base is the affront both to the messenger and to him that sent him. This sin, as it is against Christ, is also against the Spirit of God, because Christ was fitted by the Spirit, and furnished with all fulness in his human nature, for the accomplishment of his work in the world. It was by the strength of the Spirit that he first entered the lists with our great enemy, who had first moved the rebellion of man, Mat. 4:1, and the same Spirit acted Christ in the whole course of his prophetic office. It was through the eternal Spirit that he offered up himself a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, Heb. 9:14; but it is also more immediately against the Spirit exhorting to faith, pressing the doctrine and truths of Christ upon the souls of men, repeating again and again the things which concern salvation, offering himself to change the soul that is without form and void into a comely and beautiful workmanship. How great is this sin, then, that gives the lie to the Spirit of truth, who is infallible himself and cannot deceive, nor could no more be employed about a trivial and unworthy affair than Christ about an unnecessary redemption! And since this sin is that which the Spirit directs his battery against, it is more peculiarly a maintaining the fort against the power of heaven and the summons of that Spirit, whose least motions we ought to obey to a full surrender. To cast away his solicitations, to put bars in his way to

hinder him an entry, is to quench the Spirit,' 1 Thes. 5:19, as if the resisting his office were a blowing out his life, and as much a stifling of him in the soul as when the Jewish fury crucified Christ upon the cross. This is as great a sin, as appears by the punishment of the Jews, who were not cast off so much for the crucifying the Lord of life as for resisting the Spirit, who would have applied for their cure that blood they had shed in their madness. Thus Stephen charged them when they stoned him, 'Ye always resist the Holy Ghost.' The Spirit is the ambassador of the Father and the Son too; he is sent by the Father, John 14:26, 'whom the Father will send in my name;' and sent by Christ, chap. 15:26, 'whom I will send unto you from the Father.' To stand against an ambassador that represents two states or princes is more than to resist him that represents only one. Christ was sent by the Father, and it is nowhere in Scripture said that the Spirit sent Christ, though it was given to him, not by measure, for the fitting him for his mediatory work, and so it is against the Spirit, as furnishing Christ with gifts and graces for his employment. But there is a further aggravation in its redounding upon the Holy Ghost, as authoritatively sent both by the Father and the Son, to build upon that foundation which Christ laid.

II. The second thing in the demonstration of the sinfulness of this sin was, that it is as bad, or worse, than the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ.

It is as bad as the Jews' crucifying Christ. It is as if we had been partners with that cursed generation at Jerusalem, that stained their hands in the blood of the Son of God. There is a spiritual crucifixion of Christ as well as a corporal one: Rev. 11:8, 'And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.' It is a speech concerning the death of the witnesses, and a description of Rome, the seat of antichrist. As it is spiritually called Sodom, and spiritually called Egypt, so the crucifixion may be understood spiritually, though there be something also literal in it; for Christ may be said to be crucified at Rome, not in regard of the place, where Christ never

was, but in regard of the Roman authority, whereby he suffered, all power of capital punishment being taken away from the Jews after their subjection to the Roman empire. The crime pretended against him was against Cæsar, the Roman magistrate; he was crucified by Pilate, a Roman president, and crucifixion was a Roman punishment. It is called Sodom because of luxury and lust, in regard of the idolatry of it, which is spiritual uncleanness (as Jerusalem is called Sodom in regard of her filthiness, Isa. 1:10, Isa. 3:9, Ezek. 16:49, 50), and called Egypt in regard of idolatry, and in regard of the similitude between the oppressions of Israel in Egypt, and Christians under the Roman jurisdiction. Now, as the name of one place is metaphorically translated to another, because of the likeness of their sin, so, by the same rule, the similitude in sin transfers the name of one sin to another. Christ is crucified by the Romish power, when he is deprived of the honour of his mediatory office, by justling in the intercessions of the virgin and other saints; of the glory of his satisfaction, in mingling with it the merits of other creatures; in his kingly office, by assuming the power of dispensations for sin, and pardoning the punishment due by his laws to it. And Christ is as much crucified by an unbeliever, when he rejects or doth not accept him as a sufficient sacrifice, a propitiating priest, a commanding king, and a teaching prophet. A man is as deeply guilty of crucifying Christ in a spiritual manner, as the Jews were in the reproaches and scoffs of him and the nailing him to the tree. As there is a spiritual entertainment of Christ, and supping with him by believing, and a spiritual bringing forth Christ in the womb of a soul, as a mother doth an infant, so there is a spiritual lifting up Christ upon the cross, and piercing his side.

Another place which proves this, is 1 Cor. 11:27, 'Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' If a man hath the guilt of any known sin upon him unrepented of, if he comes not with a suitable frame, when he hath no high thoughts of the excellency of Christ's body in the sacrament, he is partaker of the Jewish crime instead of a Saviour's merit, and acts as one that nailed him to the cross, and

pierced his side,—as an affront to the picture or statue of a prince is interpreted an affront to his person. Now if the unworthy receiving the signs of the body and blood of Christ, when a man hath no formal intent to be guilty of so great a crime in his approach, but he hath some pretences of holy ends, and addresses himself to it with some kind of seeming seriousness, make him guilty of the death of Christ how much more must he be guilty of it, who hath no value for it, doth not accept of it as the death of the Son of God, and mediator of the world?* He intimates that Christ did not suffer as a propitiation for sin, but as a malefactor, and so is like to them that crucified him. So that there are other ways of being counted before God the murderers of Christ, than if our hands had been as deeply imbrued in the blood which ran in the veins of his body, as the hands of the Jews were. It is true, all had a hand in the killing Christ, for our sins armed the hands of the executioners; they put the hammer into the right hand of the instruments, and the nails into their left hand, and, as it were, compelled their cursed hands to pierce his body.* Our sins demanded the death of the Son of God. But only unbelievers are guilty of his death, because they make that blood to be shed again in vain, which they shed when he was crucified for them.

1. Unbelief is as bad as the Jews' act in crucifying him.

2. It is worse.

1. It is as bad, in being a virtual approbation of what they did. Every voluntary sin is a justification of all acts of the same nature done in the world. The sin of the Jews was a justifying the sins of Samaria and Sodom: Ezek. 16:51, 'Thou hast justified thy sisters in all thy abominations;' those sisters, ver. 46, were Samaria and Sodom.

(1.) It comes from the same root. There is the same disposition of soul in one as in the other. They were no more of Adam's descent than we are, and no more corrupted in their nature than any other nation. We have no more good naturally than was to be found among them, and they had no more evil naturally than what is to be found

among us. Unbelief was the principle from whence all their rigour against him did arise; and had they not first been unbelievers, they had not been the Redeemer's murderers.

If there be the same disposition, and an interpretative approbation of an act, there is the same guilt in the exact eye of God's justice; for God doth not judge by outward fact, but by the inward frames of the heart, and dispositions of the soul. The blood of all the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, was to be required of that generation of the Jews in whose times Christ lived, though not a man of them had ever known Abel or Zacharias but by the history of the Scripture, Mat. 23:35, Luke 11:51; yet Christ tells them they had shed the blood of Abel, and all the rest to Zacharias. Neither did they formally approve of those actions; no doubt but they would in words have testified an abhorreny of Cain, as well as many among us will their indignation against the traitor Judas, and would have disowned the wicked and cruel facts of their ancestors, who had dyed their hands over and over again in the blood of the prophets and messengers of God; yet they were still guilty of all that blood, because they had the same disposition of heart, by their unbelief, to do the same act as Cain did, who was the head of the unbelieving world; and they did imitate Cain in his hatred of his brother, by hating Christ, who was to be the grand sacrifice typified by the sacrifice Abel offered, and by Abel's blood too; and, having such a frame, would have used the same person with as much rigour, were he then alive, as Cain did. So no doubt but there is the same disposition in every unbeliever to use Christ as cruelly, were he now alive upon the earth in the same state as he then was, and should fall foul upon the reigning sins of men's hearts, as the Jews did then use him; for the reason is the same. If those Jews, notwithstanding all their glavering affection to the prophets that had been slain by their ancestors, would have handled them as sharply, and persecuted them to the death, had they been alive in their time, and had as faithfully performed their office and message as they did then, no doubt but men having the same disposition would do as much to Christ; and, having the same root in them, and bringing forth the

same fruit, where it is in their power, they would do the same to Christ or any other object, if it were as obvious to them as that which is the mark of their fury. As those Jews had the spirit of their murdering fathers in them, though themselves did not believe it, so every unbeliever hath the spirit of the crucifying Jews in him, though they themselves think no such thing, and would with as much abhorrency detest such a fact as the Jews did that of their fathers. There is still the same rancorous root of bitterness latent in the heart and nature, as was in theirs.

(2.) It hath the same object now, the person of Christ, though in another manner. Whatsoever is done against the commands, and doctrine, and people of Christ, against his inward motions in the soul, is done against the person of Christ: Acts 9:4, 'Why persecutest thou me?' How could the persecution of believers by Saul be more against the person of Christ than unbelief, the root from whence that furious zeal did branch? As the Father appeared principally in the creation of the world, forming the design of it, and upon that occasion settled the law as a rule of man's obedience, every sin against the law is an offence against him, a blasphemy of the Father. But redemption being the work of the Son, by his suffering and resurrection, and the Son being the matter and subject of the doctrine of the gospel, and set forth as an object of faith, and appointed by the Father the lawgiver of the world, the gospel refers properly to the person of Christ; and unbelief is a sin committed against the person of the Son, and an outraging him. Apostasy and denying Christ to be the Messiah is by the apostle called a crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh: Heb. 6:6, 'They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' It is such an act as is by interpretation a crucifying the person of the Son of God; it is a rejecting his person and offices, and counting him a deceiver, as the Jews did, Mat. 27:63, and not the Son of God; for if we do count of him as one sent from God, why do we not believe in him? why do we run from him? Ἐαυτοῖς, to themselves, or in, or with themselves, as much as in them lies. All his common works, which were upon their hearts, they kill, which is as much as a killing his

person; what they do to his truth, and the convictions they have, they would do to his person were he in their power. They put him to an open shame, for as he was derided and reproached as an impostor when he was upon the cross, so men by their unbelief shame him before the eyes of men. The action in refusing him and departing from him asserts that there are no allurements in him, nothing worthy of love, but worthy of that reproachful usage he had among his crucifiers. As apostasy is attended with this guilt in the account of the apostle, so is all unbelief, according to the degrees of it, more or less, because it is a virtual denial of Christ's being what really he is, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; which was that the Jews denied, and therefore crucified him, and therefore is a sin against the person of Christ as well as theirs. As faith pitcheth upon the person of Christ as its proper object, so the refusal of the person of Christ is that which doth constitute this sin of unbelief.

(3.) It hath the same end, the indulgence of some carnal lust and end. Is not our love naturally as strong to those corruptions which lie nuzzling in our natures? Are we not as fond of them, as indulgent to them, as the scribes and pharisees were to theirs? They did not pay a greater homage to their beloved sin, and adore their heart-idols with a greater veneration, than every one of us endeavour to pleasure ours naturally; and this is the main end of every unrenewed unbelieving person. Therefore, if Christ were among us in the same garb as he was among the Jews, and shewed his dislike of our vices and corruptions, and laid the axe to the root of them, though edged with so many miracles as he did among them, what reason have we to think that he should not meet with the same rude entertainment among us as he did among them? Our nature is no better than theirs, our lusts as dear to us as theirs, principles of education as strong in us as theirs; we have the same spiritual progenitor by nature as they had, even the devil, and his lusts we do as well as they: John 8:44, Eph. 2:2, 3, 'The spirit that works in the children of disobedience (ἀπειθείας, unpersuadableness), among whom also we had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind,' and are as much guided by his inspirations as they; for the

apostle pronounceth it of all, of himself and the Gentiles, as well as Christ had before of the Jews. Would we not befriend our father, especially when he would put forth his utmost power and malice in us upon such an occasion, as he did at that time in them? And we rather should use him more despitefully, because if he did come in the flesh, it would be contrary to expectations, whereas they expected the Messiah, and gloried in the promise of his coming. Had any told them before, that they should have used him so barbarously as they did, they would have thought themselves wronged and defamed. What! to crucify him whose coming they longed for, and had expected in their successive generations, from the time of Adam's being cast out of paradise! Yet for all this, you know how they used him, because he came in another garb than they expected. They looked for him to come as a conqueror, and he came as a person not knowing where to lay his head. And what unbeliever is there among us that can assure himself he would not do the like, were Christ in person present, and struck as cross a blow at his darling corruptions as he did at those of the Jews in that time? What pharisees would not swell against him, if he should tell them of loading men with grievous burdens, and charge them with their hypocrisy and formal devotions, and thunderingly tell them they should die in their sins? Is there not the same reason? Have not men the same love to their vices as they had then? What can alter their affections? Nothing but faith. While men, therefore, remaining in unbelief, have the same dispositions, the same ends, and the same motives to unbelief as they had, they would do the same acts against Christ, out of the same disposition, and for the same ends, which managed them in all that tragedy. They would still fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Those that sacrifice the truths, precepts, ordinances of Christ to their Delilahs, would sacrifice Christ himself, whose truths, precepts, and ordinances they are. If Christ were again upon the earth in the same state, he would be as faithful to his Father's instructions as he was then; and unbelievers would be as faithful to their father's, the devil's, instructions, as the Jews were then.

As we see in what sense unbelief now is as bad as the Jews' crucifying, as having the same disposition, being set against the same object and guided by the same ends and motives, so we shall see that

2. Unbelief now is worse than the unbelief of the Jews, and worse than that act of crucifying Christ, and more grievous to him. They crucified him by the authority of Pilate, and pretended a law among them whereby he ought to die. But what pretence can there be for any man's unbelief among us? Our unbelief at the last day will be an excuse of theirs.* The Jews resisted a truth offered to them, but we resist the force and power of that truth which in the notion we own. While we receive it in our assent, we reject it in our consent; we profess him to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world in our doctrine, and proclaim it a mere imposture in our practice. Theirs was a rejecting him; ours a scorn and mocking of him. Besides, we by our baptism are obliged votaries to him; we have given up our names to Christ in an outward profession, and promised faith in him and obedience to him. The Jews did not formally so, though implicitly they did, as the doctrine of it was contained in the ceremonies of the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. But our unbelief is manifested after solemn promises to stick to him.

(1.) Our unbelief is against the spiritual discovery of Christ; theirs was not. Their sin was against his personal discovery, ours against his spiritual, in the miraculous appearance of the Spirit in the apostles' preaching. The coming of the Spirit depended upon Christ's glorification, John 7:39; their sin therefore could not be so great as ours, it being against a less, and ours against a greater, discovery of Christ by the effusion of the Holy Ghost. It is a contempt of Christ after a full revelation. The Jews had better excuses to plead for the mitigation of their crime, the prophecies concerning the Messiah were obscure till cleared by the event, and delivered in such expressions that a natural understanding might conceive them to be meant of an outward splendour rather than a spiritual glory. The condition of Christ was so mean and disguised in the world, that they could scarce discern the Lord of glory for the mask of infirm flesh,

could not tell how to imagine him to be the Son of God, who was meaner than an ordinary man in his outward appearance. There were, indeed, some sparks of his divinity flashed out in his words and actions, but short of those illustrious beams wherewith he afterwards chased away the darkness of the world, short of that power whereby afterwards he broke open the gates of hell, and hurled Satan, the prince of it, from his long-possessed throne. They crucified him, when as yet the Spirit had not spread the light abroad, discovered the reason of all the foregoing methods, had not yet shewed him to be the Lord of glory, nor animated some men to preach him in the world and bear witness to the truth of his mission against their worldly interest, and whatsoever was dear unto them there. Not a nation in the world had then submitted their sceptre to the Son of God; the world as yet lay steeped in idolatry, and wallowed in the sink of hell. But our unbelief being after the clearest discovery of him, and his appearance in the power of his royalty, since he hath a long time reigned in the midst of his enemies, is rendered more vile, unreasonable, and inexcusable. The Spirit doth not speak of Christ to come in an obscure style, as the prophets did, but manifests things past, things accomplished, in unveiled and clear expressions, and with an undeniable light. He discovers not Christ on earth in a mean flesh and form of a servant, but in the glory of the Son of God, and as a mediator for man, invested with the government of the world, and hath sealed the truth of his mission with the conversion of many nations, and spread it over all parts of the world, contrary to human methods, whereby false religions and errors have been propagated in the earth. The promise of the Spirit's mission, made by our Saviour on earth, being performed, is an evidence of the acceptance Christ finds with the Father, and of the stability of all his declarations as a foundation of faith. It is against this appearance of his our present unbelief is, which makes it more criminal than that of the Jews in crucifying him when he was under a veil. We have seen the conquest he hath made by his Spirit for so many ages since his being upon the earth; how prodigious, then, is our heart-refusal of him after so many records of his power, and troops of miracles wrought by the strength of his name!

(2.) They crucified him when he was in a state of humiliation; our unbelief is against him, since he is exalted at the right hand of his Father. There is a great deal of difference between the contempt of one upon a dunghill and upon a throne. They sinned not against a Christ crucified for them; he had not then died for them when they apprehended him and sought his death. Theirs was against God's act in sending Christ; ours against God's act in sending him, and glorifying him also. Theirs was against Christ in his low estate; ours against Christ in his exalted nature. Theirs against Christ as a man on earth; ours against him as the Son of God in heaven, and in his approaches to the fulness of his kingly authority in judging the world. They crucified his humanity, and we, in a manner, his divinity. They believed not in him when he was clouded in the form of a servant; we believe not in him when he hath reassumed the glory of the Deity. He was as a contemptible shrub among them, making no appearance of rising into a full-grown tree; there was not that manifest grandeur wherein he seemed to be promised: he appeared not in such a garb as to seem desirable to them: Isa. 53:2, 'He was as a root out of a dry ground.' But we have heard of him in his glory mounting above the violences of men, dropping off the infirmities of the flesh, shaking off the fetters of death by a victorious resurrection, and triumphant ascending above the heavens to live for ever, and all this that he might be believed on, confided in as the Redeemer of the world. Judge, then, which unbelief is more sinful. They crucified him whom they supposed to be a man and a malefactor; we crucify him who was glorified after he was crucified for us. We crucify him since his divinity hath been manifested above his humanity; they when his humanity had veiled his divinity. Which of the Jews, that should have seen Christ at the right hand of God, as Stephen did, would have dared to utter those words, 'Crucify him, crucify him!'^{*} Every unbeliever, that dares not speak it, dares do it. They will be confounded, when they see him glorious whom they have pierced. Many of them bewailed their crime when they believed his resurrection; we reproach him while we pretend to believe him glorious, and crucify him again by rejecting his promises and precepts, whom we confess to be risen from the grave. Had the Jews

had the Messiah only promised them by the prophets,[†] and had not believed it, it had not been so great a sin as not to believe him after he came, and prefer Cæsar, an earthly king, before him, and the life of Barabbas, a murderer, before his. It was an higher sin to refuse him, not only since he was promised, but was come, and had preached and wrought miracles among them, and had lived holily; yet it was a greater sin than of crucifying him, not to believe on him after he was dead, raised again, ascended into heaven, had sent the Holy Ghost and converted a world. Peter denied Christ, Judas betrayed him, Pilate condemned him, the Jews crucified him, but not one of them had then seen him dead, raised, and ascended into heaven, and sending the Holy Ghost, as we have full evidences of. As if the Jews did not believe Moses, when he pretended in Egypt to deliver them, by taking the Israelite's part, and killing the Egyptian, it was no such great thing. But after he had been, as it were, dead by his absence, and returned again, by a course of miracles, knocked off their chains, brought them through the Red Sea, for them then to carry themselves so to him, as if he had not delivered them, was a great injury to God and him. So it is a greater injury, since Christ, by his death, hath freed us from evil, brought the kingdom of heaven, his gospel, among us, and that for many years, that we should not heartily comply with his terms, but behave ourselves towards him as if he were a mere man, an unworthy man, had done nothing for us, had not been taken notice of by God, but in a way of punishment. So to carry ourselves after his high exaltation, is unparalleled, even among devils, and by the sin of the Jews in crucifying him. And our notional owning him, or assenting to the articles of the creed concerning his death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God, and his coming to judge the quick and the dead, is so far from alleviating the crime, that it renders it more base and unworthy, not to cast ourselves upon him for salvation, resign up ourselves to be saved in his way, and guided by his precepts, after our acknowledgments of his death and exaltation. I say, it renders it more unworthy than the Jews' murder, or the present unbelief of their posterity, because it is a contradiction to our own professed sentiments.

(3.) Our unbelief is more palpably against the offices of Christ than theirs was: it was not of that black hue then. Christ had not a full investiture in his offices, he had not all royal power settled upon him, till after his sacrificing himself. For the full exercise of those offices belonged to his state of exaltation, and he was not perfected till he was offered up, Heb. 5:9; it is now against his priestly office settled upon him for ever, and against a special part of it, his intercession. They sinned against Christ ready to offer up himself a sacrifice; we against Christ who hath offered himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God; we sin against him as an advocate settled at the right hand of God. It is true, Christ did intercede before his coming in the flesh, and evidences of it there are in Scripture, but that was not evident to the Jews. It was then upon the account of what he was by compact to suffer, it is now upon the account of what, according to that compact, he hath suffered; it is a sin, therefore, more peculiarly against his priestly office, in his pleading for all the fruits of his oblation, and appearing in the presence of God for us, as well as appearing for God to us; theirs was against the latter, and ours against both; theirs was against Christ, when as yet the contract was to be performed; ours against him, when, according to the contract, the price and ransom is paid; theirs was when the debt due to God remained unsatisfied; ours when God hath given Christ an acquittance for the payment of it, and made him king, priest, prophet, prince, and saviour, and for ever invested him in each particular office. It was not by any force, but with the greatest willingness, that he offered up himself 'to destroy the works of the devil,' 1 John 3:8, and to be, in all respects, an officer of mercy at the right hand of his Father. If we shall endeavour to preserve him, whom Christ came to cast out by his death; if we preserve any of those works by unbelief, Christ came to destroy; if we continue the sceptre of Satan in his hands by our want of faith; nay, if we preserve that unbelief, which was the first work that the devil framed in our first parents by his subtlety, we do that which hinders the glory of his offices, and that which is more contrary to his honour than the death the Jews inflicted on him.* His death did not discontent him, he was highly willing to bow down his head under it, it was the way to the

glory of all his offices; he was to pass through the cross to the throne, and be first a sacrifice before he could be an advocate, and yield up the Ghost before he could send the Spirit. Unbelief, then, which would deprive him of the glory of all this, is more injurious than those Jews were which nailed him to the cross, and more grievous than the ignominious death he suffered.

(4.) Our unbelief is against Christ after he hath finished his work, their act was against him when he was moving towards the performance of it. He had not then manifested the grandeur of his affection; he had, indeed, taken human nature, and humbled himself to the infirm condition of our flesh; but his death, which was the commendation of his love, and the discovery of his affection in redemption, was not then suffered; their sin could not be against this, because it was not yet manifested; they made way by their sin for a discovery of that love we sin against. They sinned against Christ as he was preparing himself to be a sacrifice for them, and sanctifying himself to be an atoning offering; we sin against him as already consecrated by his own blood, and consecrating for us 'by his own flesh a living way,' Heb. 10:20. In the crucifying of him they sinned against Christ as the Son of God, but not against Christ as a sacrifice; they rather contributed, though not intentionally, to this oblation of himself. but we sin against the only sacrifice for sin, which hath been offered for us, so that there is a greater ingratitude and contempt in our sin than theirs; neither the priests nor people, Pilate nor Judas, had seen Christ dead for them, before their own act in crucifying him. Judas betrayed him, the people voted him, and Pilate condemned him to death; but an unbeliever betrays, votes, condemns the death of Christ to death; he betrays the ends of it, condemns that to a nullity which God accepted as a price, and votes against those offices which were founded upon his death, and which he could not have exercised if he had not died, and thereby virtually pulls him from his throne, unto which he was to pass by the cross: for 'ought not Christ first to suffer, and so to enter into his glory?' Luke 24:26.

(5.) Our unbelief is against a more signal manifestation of God's attributes in their highest perfection. God hath not opened the treasures of his wisdom to man till the sufferings of Christ were over, nor was his love manifested in the highest manner till our Saviour bled, nor his justice discovered till the stroke was given, nor did his power triumph but in the resurrection of our Saviour. The glory of those attributes lay hid and wrapped up in him, till Christ came down from the cross, and rose from the grave. We sin against that goodness which pitied us more than it seemed to pity his own Son. We sin against that justice that sheathed a sword in his bowels to spare our souls. We sin against that blood that sealed our pardon, against that truth which had brought the promises upon record for so many ages to an happy accomplishment, and made them yea and amen, fully irreversible, by our Saviour's blood; against a wisdom that astonished angels more than that in the whole creation, and against an almighty strength that never bared its arm so much as in raising our surety laden with our guilt. Since nothing of those appeared so eminent but in and after the crucifixion of Christ, their sin could not so sully the honour of those which did not then appear. They were ignorant instruments in the hands of God to promote rather than violate the honour of those attributes. But doth not our unbelief endeavour to take off the wheels of their triumphant chariot, and lay the honour of them in the dust? The Jews, indeed, after the death of Christ, sinned against all these in their brightness as well as any of us; but not in the very act of crucifixion, because by the death of the Son of God these excellencies were brought in all their glories to our view, which had else lain invisible in the secret place of the Most High, and never should have shewn their faces to the sons of men. Without it, neither men nor angels could have had any prospect of them. And though we imitate not the Jews in the act of crucifixion, it is not for want of natural disposition, but for want of opportunity. Christ is not here in person to be crucified by us, but we tread in the steps of the Jewish unbelief, which was more gross after the passion of Christ than before; and we crucify the glory of those attributes of God, which received their life from the blood of the Redeemer.

(6.) Our unbelief is aggravated from the accomplishment of the promises and threatenings for unbelief, which their sin was not against. We have greater assurances since Christ's ascension of the performance of promises than they had before. The gospel hath, according to the prediction of Christ, from a grain of mustard-seed, risen up to a mighty tree. It hath been by various providences carried into remote corners, spread farther than the Roman eagles. It hath been made known in the then unknown parts of America. It hath visited all nations, Mat. 24:14, and a great harvest hath sprung up in all ages since, from the seed of our Saviour's body cast into the ground, according to his prophecy, John 12:24. We have known the Jews sinking under the truth of his threatening, and the destruction of Jerusalem, the fatal place of his suffering. We see them to this day stripped of the badges of God's ancient favours, without a king or prince, without a sacrifice, without image, ephod, or teraphim.* We see the scars of God's just anger upon them for above 1600 years, not yet seeking the Lord their God, and David their king, Hosea 3:4, 5. And besides, we have known churches degenerate in their faith, and (as the fruit of it) laid in the dust; the tabernacle of God removed from them; their lands desolated, and their posterity laid in thick darkness. How have we known him in the glory of his mercy and truth, and the rigours of his justice! Have we not seen him with his iron rod crushing his beloved people, and alluring with his golden sceptre nations alienated from the life of God, and strangers to the covenant of promise? There hath not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised by the hand of Moses, the prophets, and his own Son, 1 Kings 8:56; no, nor one word of all those sad threatenings which were thundered out against that unbelieving nation, who lie yet under that wretched distemper of slighting the Son of David, the promised seed, and under the fearful curse of God's oath, that they 'shall not enter into his rest,' Heb. 3:18, 19. And is our unbelief, that spurns at all those evidences of his truth or faithfulness, and his wrath against incredulity, less criminal than theirs was? They sinned against the word of his promise and threatening, and we against the work and performance of both. They believed not, when no nation had been cast off, nor could be cast off,

for that sin. But we believe not, when we know that for this sin God hath taken away the birthright from the Jew. Our sin is therefore against the mercies which believers upon record have had for their faith, and against the judgments God hath poured out on the Jews and others for their unbelief. How grievous is it to commit that sin, for which persons bear the tokens of God's wrath before our eyes! And never palliate the business by pleading that none of us are as the Jews, because we profess Christ to be the Messiah, and own him to be the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world; our unbelief is worse than theirs, because we orally own him, and cordially deny him. It is the same with theirs in the inward disposition, though not in the outward profession.

(7.) Our unbelief is against greater knowledge than theirs was.

[1.] The act itself. They put him to death through ignorance, whom, if they had known in the excellency of his person, they would not have crucified, 1 Cor. 2:8. Peter bears the same witness, Acts 3:17, 'I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;† and Christ himself in his dying prayer bore witness to this: Luke 23:34, 'They know not what they do.' They crucified him when his divinity was under a veil, and therefore there are milder expressions of their crucifying Christ than there can be of ours. Would the apostles speak truth were they living, and should utter the same expressions of our infidelity, 'Had they known him, they would not have slighted him'? or can Christ put up the same prayer now for those that contemn him under all the glorious marks of his deity? can he say, 'Father, they know me not, have not had any revelations of me to be the Son of God'? Without question, no. It must be thus, Father, they have seen the trophies of my death in the world, they have known the transcendent effects of my glorification, they have read, and read again, in the records of Scripture (which they confess they do not question) the conquests I have made, the multitude of disciples I have gained, and the treading devils under my feet; yet remain worse devils than those I have subdued. We do believe his ascension and session at the right hand of God, and answer not the ends of them.

We refuse Christ against knowledge, which they did through ignorance. It was a mitigation of Paul's sin that he persecuted 'ignorantly in unbelief,' 1 Tim. 1:13; he did not believe Christ to be that person that really he was. Theirs, as well as his, was an ignorant unbelief, ours a knowing one; theirs was a crucifying Christ ignorantly in unbelief, ours a rejecting Christ knowingly in faith; i.e. we consent not to that unto which we profess our assent. They thought him to be mere man and a criminal, and did not assent to the dignity of his person; we acknowledge him to be God and Redeemer, and we consent not to the reasonableness of his terms. The guilt is greater when it is against clear manifestations, gracious offers, sweet wooings, multiplied essays of love and power, than when against some few tastes; and to heighten it, a guilt under a self-condemnation.

[2.] The examples of converts more. The examples of converts in the time of Christ were produced as living witnesses against the Jews in that time: Mat. 21:32, 'Publicans and harlots believed John, and you, when you had seen it, believed not;' and no doubt they will be brought as testimonies at the last day. Was it so high an aggravation then, and is it less now, against those who have had not only those testimonies upon record, but many other testimonies of faith in the ages since and their own age; yea, the turning the scales of the whole world, and the glorious conquests of Christ by ways different from the methods of men? The unbelief after the sight of Christ's converting power upon any heart is a charge as great, if not greater, than the refusing to believe upon a single declaration of the doctrine, because every conversion in our sight is an evidence of the power of Christ, and the end of his coming and suffering. Such works are his standing miracles now, which bear witness of him. The evidences whereby Christ chargeth the Jews' unbelief with a greater guilt come short of those which we have had: John 10:25, 'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' It is in this respect against greater miracles than Christ performed among them; for greater works were done by the apostles than by Christ, John 14:12, which must be meant of the conversion of men, and the great success

they had in that work, more than Christ while he was upon the earth in his person. The Jews had great means, the power of his miracles, the sweetness of his conversation, to assist against their infidelity, yet they vilified his person, misinterpreted his doctrine, ascribed the sparks of his divinity to the powers of hell and the strength of Beelzebub, and at length exposed him to the cross. Is not our unbelief a virtual approbation of all that they did against those hints and means which might have persuaded them to another kind of carriage? But ours hath something to make it more base and unreasonable, it being against the power of his doctrine in converting a world, and supporting myriads of martyrs in bearing their testimony to his truth under the flames and severest punishments. The conversions in the days of his flesh were some few sprinklings within the compass of Judea and Samaria; the evidences we have had have been whole shoals upon the surface of the earth. The miracles he wrought were unanswerable testimonies of his mission, but altogether not so great as that of his resurrection, which was a miracle after they had put him to death. It is this we sin against, which they did not in the crucifixion of him.

[3.] Theirs was against a shorter time of instruction than ours. It was but between three and four years; about three years and a half Christ taught among them. It is ten, twenty, or more years Christ hath been polling at our hearts, and proposing the terms of the gospel. We sin against the instruction they had, for we have them transmitted to us by faithful witnesses; against the teachings of the apostles, which were comments upon the gospel; against multitudes of sermons sounding in our ears. What is the crucifying Christ after three years' hearing of his words and seeing his miracles, to twenty or thirty years' vilifying his person, and disparaging his office, and treading under foot the Son of God?

[4.] Suppose they had known what they did, yet their crucifying of him was but one act. But since every act of unbelief, and every single refusal of his gracious terms, is a crucifying the Son of God afresh, is

the guilt of multiplied acts put together less than one single one, especially when every act hath a knowledge to aggravate it?

(8.) They in crucifying Christ did what God had determined, what Christ was willing to, but it is not so in our unbelief. I do not intend this to lessen their sin (for they had no respect to the decree of God in the execution of Christ) but it aggravates ours. God is said to deliver up Christ (Acts 2:23, 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain') not only as an act of his prescience, but his counsel, and that determinate, i.e. stable and irreversible. He makes a distinction between these two acts; in God it was an act of counsel, in them an act of wickedness, 'by wicked hands.' There was a previous act of counsel, and after that an actual tradition: Rom. 8:32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' God decreed the sufferings of Christ, but he never positively decreed any man's unbelief, though he decreed to permit it.

[1.] It was necessary. It is not imaginable that the death of Christ could be brought about but in some such way as it was, by the wickedness of man, to answer all the gracious purposes of God. There was a necessity of it to the satisfaction of his justice, in regard of the sanction of the law, and the inability of any or all mere creatures to restore the damaged honour of the law. He could not in his own person deserve death; for could it be supposed that our Saviour should be guilty of any capital crime, whereby, according to the righteousness of the Jewish laws, he had forfeited his life, the whole frame of redemption had cracked asunder, the person wanting that innocence in himself which was necessary to make satisfaction for others? Had God put him to death by some remarkable stroke from heaven, without the intervention of man, the voluntariness of Christ, which was necessary to the perfection of his oblation, had not been evident, his innocence would not have been assured to us. The remarkable stroke would have presented him to man under the notion of a notorious sinner, that heaven could patiently bear no longer. The gospel could not have been propagated. Who would have

entertained that person as a Saviour, whose innocence could not be cleared? None who, according to the common sentiments of men, appeared as a malefactor, would have been embraced as a Redeemer. If it be said, God might have raised him again after such a stroke, and his resurrection would have made him entertainable as one beloved of God, but what evidences could there have been that it was a resurrection, or that he had been really dead? But in this way of God's procedure, the innocence of Christ, his freeness to suffer, the reality of his death and resurrection, are undeniably assured to us. There was therefore a necessity of the death of Christ, and in some such way as that whereby it was executed, both in regard of the counsel of God, and the fulfilling of the predictions which had foretold the circumstances. But our unbelief is in no manner necessary, either *necessitate pacti*, by necessity of contract, as that was, or *necessitate medii*, of means, as that was to the salvation of men. For this sin is point blank against any covenant of God, and renders damnation certain, and salvation impossible. The death of Christ was necessary for the satisfaction of God's justice, though it was not formally necessary that those very persons should crucify him. The sufferings of Christ were necessary to his glory; his heel was to be bruised by the devil, as well as the devil's head by him. But unbelief is not a due to him as a means for the glory of his person; he was to suffer, for 'ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' But ought cannot be set on unbelief. It cannot be said, Ought not Christ to have been rejected, contemned, and so to have entered into his glory? His death was necessary in order thereunto, but not our unbelief.

[2.] Besides, there was an 'obedience unto death' enjoined to Christ,* and his will complied with it, both his divine and human will; his will as he was the Son of God, and his will as he was the Son of David. But his will neither as he is the Son of God, nor as he is the Son of man, is for unbelief. Since he was to be obedient to death, the suffering the death then inflicted on him was a part of his obedience; but the suffering a new crucifixion and disparagement by infidelity, since he went to glory, is no part of the obedience owing by Christ to his

Father. We do that in not believing which doth more displease him, and is more against the interest of his glory, than they did in putting him to death, to which his will, with the greatest freeness, and the impulse of a divine law in his heart, persuaded him, and which indeed was the chief end of his coming.

[3.] If we may judge of sin by the consequences of it, our sin is far greater than theirs. The salvation of man, the glory of God's love, justice, wisdom; the glory of Christ's patience, tenderness, the mission of the Holy Ghost, the accomplishment of promises, prophecies, were the consequents of this; not simply fruits of the Jews' action, but of Christ's passion; not the consequents intentionally of their wickedness, but of God's grace. God extracted this glory to himself, and an immense good to man, from the malice of the devil and the Jews. Can any man's unbelief, since Christ hath suffered, be ever an occasion of so great a good? It cannot be imagined how the infinite power of God can make any man's unbelief instrumental to such glorious ends, unless he should send a Saviour to suffer the same tragedy over again in his own person. Nothing but the glory of God's justice, the manifestation of his truth in his wrathful threatenings, the satisfaction of the devil's malice, and the eternal misery of the immortal soul, can be the consequents of present infidelity. Their sin was a means ordered by God to do that, which procured the most inestimable blessings for us; but our sin is against all the blessings purchased by that death, and all the tokens of Christ's love bestowed upon the world at his ascension.

III. The third thing in the sinfulness of this sin was, besides the sinfulness as it respects God, and as it is as bad, and in some sense worse, than the sin of the Jews; so there are many other reasons which manifest the sinfulness of this sin of infidelity.

1. This sin of unbelief is much of the same nature with the first sin of the devils. It is probable by the Scripture that pride was the sin: 1 Tim. 3:6, 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' If we take it passively, lest he fall as the

devil fell by his pride against God, there is indeed pride in every sin, but the formality of the devil's sin seems by this place to consist in pride, who being puffed up with his dignity in the creation, was hurled into a lake of fire. What was the occasion of his pride, or the particular formality of his pride, is not easily determinable.

There are four ways* of his sinning conjectured by men.

(1.) That seeing himself the highest of created beings, and most approaching in likeness to God, he affected an equality with God, Ezek. 28:12, 13, &c. to 17, which, though literally it be spoken of Tyre, yet some understand it allusively of the chief angel; because he speaks of his being in Eden, the garden of God, an anointed cherub that covers, and was upon the holy mount of God, perfect in his ways, till iniquity was found in him. He set his heart as the heart of God, his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness, wherein, say they, the sin of Tyre, as well as his excellency, is compared to the excellency of the devil in his creation, and his sin at his fall.

(2.) That the devil endeavoured to obtain a blessedness by his own strength, without dependence on grace. As if he had been sufficient to make himself happy by the strength of those natural perfections God had first endowed him with at his creation. He apprehended nothing else needful for him but the portion at first bestowed upon him, and trusted to obtain that by himself which he could only have by the grace of his Creator. He would be like God in being the fountain and principle of his own happiness, and equal himself to God in deserting any dependence upon God's sufficiency to rely upon his own.

(3.) Others say, that the devil affected a pre-eminence over every creature; and seeing the legions of angels created with him, and himself in the highest rank, he would be singular, subject to none, and ruler over all; choosing rather, saith Austin, to delight in the subjection of others to him, than in his subjection to God; affecting

that royal dignity which was only due to the Son of God, and would not be a ministering spirit to the heirs of salvation, creatures of an inferior rank and baser alloy than himself, over whom he expected an absolute authority, when all the angels, without exemption of any, were designed to this office: Heb. 1:14, 'Are they not all ministering spirits?' as the elder children are ordered to take care of the younger in a family. He envied Christ the dignity of being set in the human nature 'above principalities and powers,' Eph. 1:19, 20. This hath a likelihood in it, since he sets himself chiefly against mankind, as having a particular enmity against them, whose dignity in the hypostatical union was envied by him, which was his sin, and the cause of his fall. Men always have the greatest animosity against them, upon whose account and occasion they suffer.

(4.) Others say, that the sin of the devil was a refusal to be subject to Christ, when the revelation was made to him and the other angels of his future incarnation: Heb. 1:6, 'And again, when he brings in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him,' πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ. This particle again they join with brings in, and the Greek favours this, 'when he again brings in his first begotten into the world;' signifying that he had brought his Son into the world before as an object of worship, by a particular revelation made to the angels, and required the worship of him in a peculiar manner, not only as one with himself in the Deity, which they could not be supposed to refuse, but under another relation, as the head of their confirmation, and the fountain from whence they were to derive their blessedness. God intended to 'gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even unto him,' Eph. 1:10; this being proposed to them was refused by Satan and his adherents, glorying in their own natural perfection, and conceiving they had strength enough of themselves, and needed no additional grace, and were loath to be subject to a nature inferior in natural perfections to their own, and worship an inferior nature to theirs in union with the Son of God. 'Let all the angels of God worship him,' is as much as to say, Let all the angels of God follow his direction, which, upon the account of their natural perfection,

they refused to submit unto, because they were then to be subject to the human nature.

In all these ways unbelief has a resemblance to the devil's sin. It affects an equality with God in a self-dependence, rests in the sufficiency of its own righteousness, without bowing down the will to the acceptance of grace, delights not in subjection to God, refuseth Christ, the head and mediator of God's appointment. In all which pride is signal; and indeed pride of reason, and pride of will, are the two arms wherein the strength of unbelief lies.

This latter way, whereby the devil is said to sin, seems to be more probable. They are said to fall through pride; not a pride of aspiring to be equal with their Creator, for they, being created with the clearest intellectuals, and knowing themselves to be creatures under an almighty power, would not attempt that which they could not but know at the first appearance to be an utter impossibility. This would suppose an error in their understanding, which their perfect nature could not incline to. It is not, therefore, likely that their sin was to desire the Godhead, or to be partaker of the nature of God in an equality with him. Nothing in God or his nature could displease them, or be any occasion of their pride, and they had power over corporeal things; but there might happen something in the disposal of the lower things of the world which might not be so agreeable to them, and therein their desires might be averse from that which was the design of God; and so it is easy to conceive that a revelation of the incarnation of Christ being made to them, and the human nature being deputed in that union to rule over the angels, this might displease them; for among all objects whereby any occasion of aversion from God might arise in them, this is most likely. It was the most considerable thing to preside and rule over mankind, and God's disposing of it otherwise in subjecting them to that nature, which, because of the excellency of their own nature they expected to rule over, is the most probable ground of their aversion. It was pride, and pride immediately against God cannot so easily be supposed, as pride upon this occasion we have spoken of.

And that such a rejecting Christ might be their sin may have some reasons for it; however, they will evidence this sin to be a conformity to the devil,

(1.) Because of the constant and uninterrupted opposition he has always manifested to the Son of God. He hath always discovered more enmity to the nature and mediation of Christ, and the faith of men in him, than he hath against the nature of God. He never so much opposed the notion of one supreme God in the world; supremacy of one God was acknowledged by all the heathens; but he endeavoured to block up any way of their entertaining the true mediator, by filling them with notions of many mediators between God and mankind, in which rank all the deities they worshipped were accounted by them, and looked upon but as mediators between the one supreme God and his creatures in the world. He hath always set himself in opposition to Christ, both among Jews and Gentiles, that he might not be believed to be the Messiah. Though he be against the whole Trinity, yet he seems to have a more particular spite against the second person, as if he had suffered more upon his account, for some crime against him, than against any other of the blessed persons in the Trinity. He raised up persecution against him from his coming into the world; he sets Herod against him when he was an infant; the rulers and rabble of the Jews, when he entered into his office; singles him out to shoot his greatest temptations against; acted Judas to betray him; raised storms against the apostles and his disciples in all parts of the world; broached errors against his deity, against his humanity, and corrupted his ordinances; so that Christ in his doctrine hath not been at quiet from this great enemy since he came first into the world. Upon which account Christ and Satan are set in direct opposition in Scripture; Christ is called the Son of man, as being the friend of man; the devil is called Satan, as being the adversary of man; he endeavours to destroy man, and Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; he is the accuser of man, and Christ the advocate of man. Upon the account of this opposition he is said more particularly to work in the first time of the gospel: Eph. 2:2, 'Now works in the children of disobedience;' now,

the gospel is come, and a crucified Saviour preached as the mediator between God and man, and the fountain of grace, he works with more strength and vigour than before. He had his empire formerly in the world; but now he works as if he had not wrought at all before; now he works in the children of disobedience (or ἀπειθείας, of unpersuadableness), to hinder them from the embracing Christ. The angels are the ministers of Christ in his mediatory kingdom; if the service of Christ be the office of angels, it is probable, the refusal to serve Christ in that office was partly the sin of devils.

(2.) Satan is the head of the unbelieving world, and men are said to be the children of the devil with a respect to this particular sin: John 8:44, 'You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.' And the first murder committed in the world, by the power of the devil in the heart of man, was in contempt of faith and the object of it, as viz., the murder of Abel by Cain, the head of the unbelieving world. They had been disputing against the doctrine of faith which Christ had preached to them, ver. 12 and ver. 24, and with respect to his discourse with them, and their unbelieving disputes against him, he tells them they were the devil's children, and they did his lusts. The lusts of the devil were suitable to the lusts the pharisees acted in this dispute; 'he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth;' he was a moral murderer of the angels that adhered to him, and were solicited by him to a revolt and mutiny; he brought them as well as himself into a spiritual death; he abode not in the truth, the truth which the pharisees now opposed, and which Christ had heard of God, ver. 40; and when they charged him that he had a devil, ver. 48, he renders a reason why he had not a devil, ver. 49, 50, because he sought not his own glory, intimating thereby that the devil's sin was a seeking his own glory; and certainly he may be well said to seek his own glory, that resolves to stand by his own natural righteousness. This place doth intimate to us, that the pharisees, in their opposition to Christ, sinned that sin which the devil sinned from the beginning, i.e. the beginning of his sin; and that sin must be a resemblance to this of the

pharisees, which was an unwillingness to own Christ as their head to stand by. And the whole mass of unbelievers are included in Satan as their head: Gen. 12:8, 'I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.' Them, in the plural number, him in the singular. Him respecting Satan, cursed in that first promise, as opposite to the seed of the woman in a peculiar manner; this him the Jews understand of Satan; he was the first unbeliever in the world, who draws a train after him, and propagates that interest of unbelief among the sons of men. He is the curser of all those who have any faith in Christ, and may well be counted the head of all unbelievers, as he was the first broacher of that sin of unbelief which is directly contrary to the blessing of Abraham. And in regard of this unbelief in Christ, Judas is called a devil: John 6:70, 'I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.' He hath the devil's nature and spirit in him in this sin.

(3.) The peculiar sense and reflection the devil hath upon himself at the appearance of Christ, seems to intimate this: Mat. 8:29, 'They cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come to torment us before the time?' They intimate their great sin in a slighting of him, 'What have we to do with thee?' which is a speech of contempt and indignation, as 2 Sam. 16:10, 'What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah?' so Joshua 22:24, 'What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?' They could not endure the sight of that person they had peculiarly refused, and for the refusal of whom they were involved in their misery. The expecting a signal torment at his hands upon his appearance, implies that their sin was more particularly against him; it flying in their face at that time, and filling them with a fresh expectation of indignation at the sight of the Judge, whom they had offended, by refusing his headship and direction.

Now, this sin of the devils, which seems to be this of refusing Christ as the foundation of their standing, and which was anciently generally supposed to be their crime, is not formally the same with our unbelief, but materially it is. They rejected not Christ as

redeemer, because they stood in no need of redemption, having not then sinned, but rejected Christ as confirmer, choosing rather to stand upon their own bottom and righteousness than have any assistance from confirmation by grace in the method of God's proposing.

So that unbelief,

(1.) Is first an imitation of the devil's sin. It is a particular invasion of the rights of God as a governor and benefactor, who hath power in both regards to appoint his own ways and methods of doing his creatures good, and directing them how they should serve him, and be preserved or saved by him; so it is an imitation of the devil, who would not be subject to God's direction, but either not serve him, or else serve him according to his own understanding. We are like him in this, when we would save ourselves according to our own methods. If the sin of the devils were a priding themselves in their own created excellency, as their chief good and ultimate end, depending upon those admirable perfections of their nature by creation, and refusing the grace offered to them for their continuance in their created happiness, then unbelief is still the same with the sin of devils, because the root of it is a seeking our own glory, a glorying in our own natural or moral perfections, or sinful affections, and thereupon refusing to come under the rule of God, and submit to his grace discovered in Christ. The building ourselves and hopes upon our own righteousness, is equivalent to that of the devils, resting upon their own natural perfection in a way of independence upon God. But howsoever, since the first sin the devil discovered upon the earth after his fall was a questioning the truth of God, which he particularly contradicted in his discourse with Eve, fastening a lie upon God,—Gen. 3:4, 'You shall not die,'—our unbelief is a resemblance to him in this, which though it slights all God's attributes, yet strikes sorest at his truth, both in his promises, precepts, and threatenings.

(2.) It is an obedience to Satan. The devil roles in every unbelieving person. His lust we do in this sin, John 8:44. And this sin is his stronghold whereby he governs men according to his pleasure. It is faith he chiefly assaults in the believer. The truth of God's commands he disputed with Eve, and the truth of the gospel promises he disputes with every true Christian. He put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and he obeyed him; he puts it into the heart of every unbeliever to contemn Christ, and he submits to him. Every sin indeed is an obedience to the devil; but since the height of his malice is to cast dirt upon God's glory in the work of redemption, infidelity is a compliance with him in his principal design. He aimed at nothing more in his first temptation of man than to draw him into an ill opinion of God, and designs nothing more than to keep him in it.

All his endeavours were to hinder the redemption of man by the Son of God. Since he hath failed in that, his skill and pains are employed to stop the application of it, and stave men off from the acceptance. To that purpose he solicits men to continue under his banners with hopes of better pay than under the standard and yoke of Christ. Every unbeliever implicitly swears an allegiance to him; there are but two heads, disobedience to one is obedience to the other; he that is not with Christ is against him; he that comes not under his government is a sworn vassal of the devils.

(3.) It is like the sin of devils in the manner of their sinning. They sinned in a state of entire felicity, we sin in a capability of the highest happiness in regard of divine offers. They 'forsook their own habitation' with God, Jude 6, and we contemn a return to the fruition of God, after many experiences of the miseries of our fall, and the gracious indulgence of our offended Creator. And by how much the more unmerited the grace is, and the less claim can be pretended to it, by so much the more contemptuous is the violation and refusal of it.

(4.) It is a sin greater than that of devils. They refused the headship of Christ over them, when they had no experience in themselves or

others of the miseries attending their refusal, till their lost happiness was past recovery; we refuse it, when we know in some sort what devils suffer, and unbelievers will suffer for their contempt. How may the devils plead, Lord, we sinned but against one covenant, we never were under a covenant of grace, we were offered to come under the head of thy appointment, but our pride ruined us. Howsoever, this head never assumed our nature, nor was punished in our stead; we were left to the doleful sound of our own chains, while those had liberty again and again proclaimed to them; thou didst stand ready to strike off their fetters and fasten ours. Had we had the mercies offered to us which those wretches have despised, and had we had hopes after some ages to be delivered from our punishments, we should have lived joyful in our future hopes, though in present misery. Our sins were not at such a rate as the sins of those guilty unbelieving souls. We did indeed refuse the covert of the wings of the Son of God. But we never refused a Christ bearing our sins in our nature, for none was offered to us, after the experience of the misery of our first contempt. Can any such plea be made by an unbeliever under the sound of the gospel?

The devils never sinned against God, that was made an angel for them; nor ever experimented so great a goodness;* they never sinned against a God that conversed with them thirty years in the midst of sorrow and misery, repeating instructions to repentance, and encouraging them with hopes of pardon; but our unbelief is against a God who hath multiplied his goodness, lamented our sins in the garden, and bore the guilt of them upon the cross. The contempt of such astonishing goodness renders our unworthy carriage towards him more inexcusable than that of devils.

2. It is of the same nature with the first sin of Adam and Eve, which so highly provoked the anger of God, and brought such a deluge of miseries upon mankind; and in some regard it is greater than theirs.

(1.) It was the first sin of Adam. Not that it appears that Adam had the same formal object of faith as we have, viz., Christ a mediator;

since there appears no discovery of Christ till after the fall, in the promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. Some, indeed, say that Christ was typified by the tree of life in paradise, because he is called in Scripture 'the true vine,' 'the bread of life;' and by 'the tree of life,' Rev. 2:7 and 22:14, they understand Christ the foundation of all happiness of man in innocency. This seems to have no foundation in the history of Adam's creation and fall, yet I know not what may be in it upon the supposition of many, and most of the schoolmen, that the devil's sin was, as hath been spoken before, a pride against Christ as their head; and perhaps, had Adam waited, Christ had been revealed as head of his standing. But this is clear, that Adam endeavoured to stand upon his own bottom, to be a rule of righteousness, and of the knowledge of good and evil to himself, and was not content to wait upon God in the way of his precept for a farther revelation from him of his mind and will. To wait upon God in the revelations he hath made, and believe his veracity in his promises and threatenings, is one part of faith; not to depend upon him, but choose a dependence on ourselves, to turn our backs upon his revealed will, to be our own carvers, is unbelief, which Adam was highly guilty of. The first poison which was diffused by the breath of the serpent, brought forth this cursed monster: Gen. 3:1, 'Yea, hath God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' exciting Eve to a diffidence of the mind of God, that he had not so contracted a goodness, and so little love to his creature, as to deny him the enjoyment of that fruit which seemed so good for food and pleasant to the eyes above any tree of the garden; that since God had created paradise for man, and put him in possession of it, man surely mistook the speech of God to him, and was a wrong interpreter of God's intentions. Afterwards, the serpent descending from a question, ver. 1, 'Hath God said?' to a plain assertion, ver. 4, 'Ye shall not surely die,' engenders unbelief, and consequently the misery of all mankind. Some anciently did,[†] and the papists now do, assert the first sin of Adam to be pride; who hearing from his wife, that upon eating that fruit he should be as God, conceived aspiring thoughts in his own mind, affected a self-excellency and dependence, and left waiting upon God to bottom upon himself; for unless he had aimed

higher than he ought to aim, he had continued in his innocent state. But what was the cause of this pride? Was it not giving credit to the words of the devil before the command and commination of God, regarding the precept as a falsity, and the threatening as a bugbear?# The first solicitation was to doubt of the veracity of God in his threatening, which they greedily swallowed, without any reflections upon the word of God spoken to them before; whence there was first an error in the understanding, before there was a corrupt appetite in the will: for since the devil's assertion, that they 'should be as gods,' was contrary to God's threatening, that they should die, they could not receive that assertion for a truth, unless they first doubted of the truth of the divine threatening, or had quite forgot it. So that it can scarce be imagined how Adam should have a proud appetite without some act of infidelity preceding; though after that pride grew up to some strength, the infidelity and aversion to God was increased. Pride and unbelief do mutually support and prop up one another. The first bait the devil laid was for unbelief: ver. 4, 'Ye shall not die.' And pride followed upon the heels: ver. 5, 'Ye shall be as gods.' Pride had scarce rose so high, had not infidelity first given it a lift. Now, when the fallen spirit had got more credit with man than the Creator, and had instilled into him a false notion of God, nothing appeared as a bar to any rebellion. When infidelity had set foot in the breach, it prepared the way for all the black legion which followed; then the dominion of God is slighted, the law of creation broken, dependence on God rejected, man would be his own lord, his own all, and God should be nothing to him. And upon the account of this unbelief, and the consequents of it in Adam, he is not reckoned among those heroes commended for their faith, Heb. 11, not that Adam was void of faith in the promised Messiah; for had he not believed that promise of a Redeemer, he would not have been careful to have transmitted it to his posterity, nor have taught Abel to sacrifice, who was instructed by his father in that religious service, as typical of the mediator, since we read of no new revelation made to Abel about him.* And it appears that God had instructed Adam in the offering of him; whence should he be clothed with the skins of beasts, without the killing them, and that not for food, since no license was for that

granted, that we read of, till after the deluge, but for sacrifice: and it cannot be supposed that Adam should be one hundred and twenty-nine years without regarding the great type of the mediator in sacrifices; for in that year it is supposed Abel was killed, because Seth was born the one hundred and thirtieth year of Adam, Gen. 5:3.† But the reason perhaps is, because his first unbelief, whereby he was the author of the ruin of mankind, obscured the glory of his after faith, the Scripture continually setting him forth as the original of all our miseries, and opposing him to Christ the restorer: Rom. 5:14, 'Death reigned from Adam,' 1 Cor. 15:22, 45, as also because the Scripture records no personal act of Adam after his fall, whereby his faith is evidenced to us. Unbelief was the sin of Adam, and faith the grace of Christ. Adam did not believe either the necessity of the precept, or infallibility of the threatening; our Saviour believed the precepts, both of the moral and mediatory law, to obey them, and the promises of God in the covenant of redemption, to rest upon God in them. And by the way, we may see a reason why God will recover us in a way of faith, because we first apostatised from him for want of it; he will have his honour restored by the creature's believing him, as it was first sullied by the creature's belying him.

[2.] Our unbelief is greater than Adam's, either than that before his fall, or in any act of it after the promise of redemption, or greater than his could be, supposing him to be a total unbeliever.

(1.) Greater than that before his fall. His was against a threatening, for we read of no promise made him before, though a promise is implied: Gen. 2:17, 'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,' and he was to live by his obedience; ours against threatening and promises also; his sin was against creating goodness, not against a crucified Saviour; that was ingratitude to God as Creator, ours ingratitude to God as Creator and Redeemer; our redemption was with greater difficulty than our creation; this was done by a word, and it was a verbal declaration Adam denied credit unto; but the other was not without the death of the Son of God, a

real testimony of God's veracity, superior to a bare verbal one. The creation met with no reluctancy in any attribute of God; this, according to the scheme of divinity, for our more clear apprehension of the order of redemption, met with a reluctancy from justice. It could be no spot on the honour of God to create, it was a manifestation of his goodness, without any appearance of contradiction; it might seem a blot upon his honour and kindness to his Son, to prefer the rebel world before the life and peace of his only begotten: his goodness to his creature seems to interfere with his goodness to his best beloved. Our unbelief and sin against the gospel, is of a more grisly hue in this respect than his, because against a manifestation of greater goodness. Ours is against a better covenant; and if that brought confusion on the world, much more will this increase our confusion, as well as our sin. That was but against one threatening, ours against many threatenings and promises; that, when the only person he had to converse with, viz., Eve, persuaded him to it; ours, when many dissuade us from it; not but that Adam's sin was very great, he not having a corrupted nature, the task appointed him being not hard, abstinence from one tree only enjoined him, with more ease to be kept than broken. To break it, therefore, was a presumptuous sin,* which is aggravated in that he received the restraint immediately from God, which Eve did not; neither doth God speak with an audible voice from heaven to us, but by the mediation of his word transmitted to us from age to age; yet in the former respects, our unbelief is of a deeper aggravation than his.

(2.) Greater than any act could be after his fall, or supposing him to be a total unbeliever. It had been still only against a word, and ours against a deed; it had been against the mediator in a promise, ours against a mediator on the cross, and on the throne; it had been against God promising, ours against God performing; his had been against God assuring it, ours against God acting it; his had been but against one promise, ours against many; it had been when there was not one to give him an example of faith, ours is when we are encompassed with a 'cloud of witnesses,' Heb. 12:1, referring to the catalogue of believers mentioned in chap. 11. Indeed, Adam's faith,

and the faith of believers in the old world, condemns our want of it. He believed, when he had no experience of the performance of any truth but that in the threatening, nor the experience of any other that went before him; but we have had the experience of God's making good his promise, and maintaining his gospel. We find the promise made to Adam, and all those concerning the Messiah made to the fathers, eminently performed; the threatenings of God upon the unbelieving Jews, the crucifiers of the Redeemer, executed; additional incentives to believe more than Adam had. We read but of one promise Adam and Abel, and the rest of the patriarchs before the flood, had, and we find not any one promise upon record made to the old world besides that first to Adam; and, therefore, supposing Adam and the rest had been unbelievers, their unbelief had not been so black as ours, because we have so much more encouragement than they had, by how much a real performance doth exceed a verbal promise.

Consider, then, upon the whole, that every act of unbelief in us is an acting over the sin of Adam, an approbation of his miscarriage, which provoked God to pour down so many miseries upon the corrupted world. It is a sin, indeed, of that magnitude, that it equals everything in greatness, but that infinite mercy which can pardon it, and embrace the returning penitent.

(3.) Unbelief is a sin against the law of nature. There are two principles evident to man by the natural law;—

1. That God is to be believed.
2. Our happiness is to be desired and secured.

[1.] As unbelief is against a divine revelation, it is against the light of nature. Though nature cannot ascend to many truths before a revelation by God, yet, when the revelation is made, and reason sees the characters of divine authority upon it, or hath no cogent arguments against it, to deny it to be the mind and promise of God,

not to believe it is a violation of the law of nature; because the poorest reason dictates this, that supposing God hath made a declaration of his will in any promise, or precept, or threatening, man is to believe what God promiseth or commands; because reason will tell him, that God cannot deceive, that veracity or truth is a necessary perfection of the divine nature; that God is able to perform what he promiseth, and therefore man is bound to believe what God promiseth, assent to it, accept of it; and believe what he commands, assent to it, and obey it. No reason can be rendered to prove anything in the world so certainly true as this principle, that I should believe God; if I do not believe him, I offend against the most indisputable principle of reason, against that which nature dictates. As no nation changeth their gods which they think to be gods, Jer. 2:11, so no people can slight that which they think to be the mind of their God, without making a breach upon their own reason. In this case faith is to be considered two ways: as it is an assent to a revelation of God, or as it is a special instrument of apprehending, and laying hold on Christ for justification, &c. In the first sense, faith is a virtue we are obliged to by the light of nature; in the second sense, it is purely an evangelical grace. Now, the law of nature tells us, our Creator is to be credited in any proposition he makes; that our belief of him is a carriage due to him; that it is infinite goodness, he will condescend to reveal himself in ways of mercy to his creature; and that this divine goodness requires an answerable and suitable return; that whatsoever is revealed ought to be entertained by all the faculties of the soul, believed in the understanding, embraced by the will, and welcomed by all the affections; for all the faculties of the soul being created by God, ought, by the law of their creation, to rise up in a due respect to everything that flows from him. If so be, then, men do assent to the gospel to be of divine revelation, and pretend to believe the promises, precepts, and threatenings contained therein, to have the stamp of a divine authority upon them, and yet rise not up in a heartily welcoming the terms of it, and pay not a suitable allegiance to that which they account the will of God, they must needs consider themselves as violators of the law of nature, and have reason to be sensible that the law of the creation will strengthen the evangelical

sentence against them; for it is against the nature of a rational creature to neglect that which he is satisfied the author of his reason doth propose to him. And those that are not allured to God by that which they think to be an act of his love, are worse than beasts: they are not men, because they neglect that love which is the cord of a man, proper for the drawing him to God. Unbelief is a plain contradiction to divine revelation. If a man think the gospel to be of divine authority, his not embracing it ariseth from a conceit that the things proposed in it are not necessary to the attaining of happiness, or that they are not as conducing to it as other means of his own invention; that they are either useless, or not necessarily useful; and in this he contradicts the law of nature, which prescribes an acquiescence in, and veneration of, anything which we have ground to think is of divine authority.

[2.] As it is against the principles of self-love. Since God hath revealed the way of the gospel, and men fancy to themselves either that they are not miserable, or that they can have some other remedy for their misery, they offend against that natural principle of self-preservation, and that in the highest concern imaginable, their eternal happiness and avoiding an eternally doleful misery. In the gospel, there are set forth pardon, peace, blessedness in heaven to the believer; death, hell, judgment to the unbeliever. The natural principle of self-love, if listened to, will direct a man to dread the misery and thirst for the happiness. There is so much light in every man, as to affect and desire a blessed immortality; for he believes there is a God, he believes that his soul is immortal, he hath natural arguments to evince that there is a state of happiness or misery after this life. He may know that he could never come out of God's mint in such a rude and filthy posture wherein he finds himself, that he was created for higher ends than those he doth commonly pursue; that there is no blessedness but in the enjoyment of some higher good than any he finds in the world; that this blessedness doth consist in the fruition of God; that there must be some way of attaining this: Ps. 4:6, 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?' Who will free us from this labyrinth of misery wherein we are involved? is the

voice of sensible nature. Then, natural reason may step in and conclude that this way proposed in the gospel is the most rational way, and though there be some mysteries in it above the ken of natural reason, and too dazzling for it; yet, taking it in the whole combination, it gives a fuller content to natural and unbiassed reason, with salvoes for the honour of God, and means for the happiness of the creature, than any religion doth. Now, when the gospel proposeth things naturally desirable by man, with means to attain those good things, and motives, from the transcendent love and grace of God to the creature, to excite his industry, for a man not to believe, is to put himself in a way of contradiction to his own natural desires, to cross his own happiness, fall out with himself, and stifle that principle of self-preservation which is natural to him, with all other creatures in their several kinds; and this principle is contradicted in every step unbelief takes in the world. I do not, by this discourse, ascribe any clearness to natural reason in the things of the gospel, or that man hath by nature a principle of a ready compliance with it, but that the happiness the gospel proposeth is naturally desirable and desired by all men; but it is not entertained by men because of their natural enmity against it, not against the good things proposed in it, but against the means and methods which God hath ordered for the attainment of them, viz. by a way of faith, a principle the pride of reason cavils with. It is man's enmity, and not his ignorance, makes him reject that in the gospel, which he desires by his natural constitution as a rational creature; and this is such a folly, which admits of no excuse, to refuse those things which are the most gratifying excellences in themselves, for a vanishing trash, a lust, which is but a magazine of torments, and treasury of everlasting wrath.

So that to conclude this, since it is confessed, I suppose, by all of us, that the gospel is of divine revelation, that the happiness the gospel doth propose is desirable, if we do not heartily embrace it in the terms of it, we contradict the two clearest principles acknowledged by all men in the world by the light of nature; we practically deny that what God reveals ought to be entertained, and we act against

that natural love to ourselves, which is the rule of the love we owe to others, and which is so riveted in the creature that it cannot cease, but with a dissolution and annihilation of its being. It can never be blotted out of the damned in hell, and in both respects we violate the clearest dictates of nature.

(4.) Unbelief is the cause of all the abominations and neglects of God committed by men under the gospel. Besides that unbelief hath been the cause in Adam of all the sins whereby the law is violated and God grieved, it is the cause of all sins where the gospel is preached. As man first fell because he did not believe God's threatening, so, since the revelation of Christ, he continues in sin, because he will not believe God's promises. He is not like to be controlled by any reason, or diverted from letting loose the reins to any lust, who will not give any credit to God, either promising, commanding, or threatening; for as faith unites us to an holy God and a spotless Saviour, whereby we become holy, so unbelief unites us to an impure devil, who, by the help of this, engenders monstrous iniquities in the soul; so that it may be said of this, as the apostle, James 3:6, saith of the tongue, 'It is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defiles the whole soul, sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.' It is the ringleader of all sin in the world, and the common incendiary that puts to the fire when any bullet is shot against God, and therefore hath a sinfulness in it above other sins, because it gives life and spirit to them all. The reason is plain, because the will moves to the embracing of things according as the understanding judgeth them to be good, and refuseth them as the understanding judgeth them to be evil.* If the motion of the will, therefore, be not towards God, but to the filth of the world, it is because the understanding is erroneous, not fully possessed with a belief that God is, and that he hath promised those good things declared in the gospel; for the will cannot have any motion which is not one way or other determined by the understanding; and when the understanding is possessed by ill notions of things, it is an ignis fatuus, and the will is apt to be misled by it into any slough.

Which appears several ways.

[1.] Faith is the root of all other graces; unbelief must, therefore, be the foundation of all other sins.† Faith and unbelief are contrary, and therefore have contrary effects; fear of God, or faith in God, is the beginning of wisdom, Prov. 9:10; infidelity is the flood-gate through which all impiety enters. When we want faith to give credit to God, we shall have enough to give credit to the devil, who suits our humour. By faith Abraham obeyed God, Heb. 11:8. Had not Abraham had faith in the promise, he had never obeyed God in sacrificing his Isaac; and where there is a want of faith in God, there will not be a sacrificing one Isaac for him. Not one sin but will be engendered in the womb of this, as well as not one grace but grows up from the womb of faith. As faith purifies the heart, so unbelief fills it with loathsome guests. No grace can be planted where unbelief is rooted, no more than corn can thrive where the ground is overgrown with weeds. Branches may as well flourish without a root, as any grace be planted without faith. An unbeliever is a dead man, deprived of the image of God, and liable to all kind of putrefaction, bearing the mark of the devil upon his soul, void of the Spirit of God, which is the principle of life. As it is the property of faith to work by love, so it is the contrary property of unbelief to work by enmity to, and hatred of, God. As faith is a going out of ourselves to God to please him, so unbelief is a departing from the living God, to ourselves and everything that is at variance with him.

[2.] If we consider every particular sin, this of unbelief will appear to be the cause of it. Why are men proud? Because they believe not God resists them. Why are men covetous? Because they believe not that God abhors it at the same rate with the sin of idolatry. Why are men uncharitable to others in their necessities? Because they believe not that he that gives to the poor lends to the Lord. Why are men ignorant? Because they believe not the word concerns them; therefore ignorance and unbelief are put together, 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. Why are men lulled in security in their treacherous ways with God? Because they bely the Lord, and count the prophet's words no firmer

than wind, Jer. 5:11–13. Why do not men fear him? Because they believe neither his goodness nor justice. Why do not men seek after God? Because his judgments are far above out of their sight, Ps. 10:5; they believe not their march towards them. What is the reason men neglect addresses to God, or pray so rarely or coldly? Because they believe him not to be a God hearing prayer, or believe not Christ to be an advocate. Why do men make show of religion to serve an interest or lust? Because they believe not God to be a searcher of the heart and a trier of the reins. Why did Sarah laugh and mock at the promise of God? Because she considered more the weakness of her age than the faithfulness and power of the promiser, Gen. 18:11, 12; she first imagined the promise false, that God mocked her, thence she fell to mocking God, and then to lying. Why did the Israelites murmur against God? Because they did not believe him for all the signs he had shewn among them, Num. 14:11. Do not our hearts in afflictions sink into fears, because we believe not God's sovereign wisdom and fatherly love in the ordering of them? Why do we fear man that shall die? Because we forget the Lord our maker, Isa. 51:12, 13. And why do we seek unlawful means to help ourselves? Because we believe not either the tenderness or all-sufficiency of his providence. What is the reason men are unreasonable and wicked, always persecuting them that would live godly? Because they have not faith, 2 Thes. 3:2. Apostasy and hardness of heart are the births of this fruitful monster, Heb. 3:12, 13. The evil heart of unbelief causeth to depart from the living God; he that undervalues the promise will not cleave to the precept, and makes no scruple to hurl away that which he believes not to be true, and change religion as the state changes profession. All miscarriages may be traced to this as their prime spring; it is therefore called not simply unbelief, but an evil heart of unbelief, that which gives advantage to the devil to pour all the floods of wickedness into the heart. What rebellions against God, resistance of the Spirit, contempt of ordinances, will he not engage in who believes God a liar? Not any sin in the world but may be found in this sink; I may therefore call it the original sin under the gospel, as infidelity was the original sin in Adam under the covenant of works. Where this unbelief is partial, all defects in believers

themselves must be ascribed to it. Whatsoever deviations there are from the precepts of the gospel are either from an habitual unbelief, or the remainders of it in the heart; they are either from a want of faith in the habit or in the act. Christ evidenceth this in his prayer for Peter, that his faith might not fail, Luke 22:32. Where faith fails, the soul will sink into any sin. His weakness of faith was the cause of his sad fall, and a total want of it had kept him under the power of it for ever as well as Judas; and though a total dissent from or a contradiction to the truth of the gospel, as considered as truth, be inconsistent with the nature and temper of a true Christian, yet there is too often such an unbelief, which is a want of a due esteem and value of the things of the gospel, which is the wicket and breach whereby sin enters, and plays rex sometimes in them.

[3.] Unbelief slights that which can only enable us to conquer sin. The end of Christ's coming was to 'finish transgression and to make an end of sin,'* to stop the flood of iniquity which had overflowed the world from the day of Adam's fall, to restrain it from exercising that empire and authority it had usurped in the earth. Though this was not the motive to God to send Christ, yet it was a main end of his mission; for it consisted not with the holiness or sovereignty of God to have a satisfaction made for sin without a destruction of the body of sin. It had also been a design below the love the Redeemer bore to his Father and to us, to free us only from our guilt, and let us remain under the power of our sin. And indeed Christ freed us from the curse of the law, that we might with more cheerfulness walk in the precepts of it; and reconciled an offended God, that we might be capable of a new and spiritual service of him. Faith is the first grace wrought in the soul in pursuance of the end of the death of Christ, to pull down thereby the corruption which had swayed the sceptre so many ages. Unbelief, then, being contrary to this, slights all those helps and assistances against transgression, and preserves sin in its full authority and command in the soul. It keeps a man from complying with this design of God in Christ, and stakes the soul down in its slavery to sin. An unbeliever cannot perform any real service to God, because where the tree is not good, the fruit cannot

be good. He is off from, and hates the root, which can only convey sap to him for the bringing forth such fruits which are acceptable to God: John 15:3–5, 'Without me you can do nothing,' nothing savoury to God. 'As the branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the vine,' and partake of its juice. They cannot pray, which is a main help against the power of sin; for 'how can they call upon him in whom they have not believed?' Rom. 10:14. It keeps in vigour all the principles of sin, encourageth and welcomes all the motions to sin, though it doth not always put them forth visibly into act, because of some external impediments. It bars the heart against true principles of service, and the assistances the Holy Ghost proffers, and thwarts God in that which was one of his principal designs. It repels those promises and threatenings which are the arms of the gospel; promises of life to the believer, and denunciations of death to the unbeliever, Mark 16:16, whereby souls are conquered to a submission to it, and a war against their lusts. The promises are alluring, the threatenings affrighting; both suited to the nature of man for the restoring his affections. Unbelief now disparageth the promises of the gospel, slights the threatenings of the gospel, pulls back from any consideration of them, whereby they lose their edge and efficacy. Who will ever spend time in the consideration of that which he thinks to be false? As the life of grace lies in consideration, so the life of sin lies in a neglect of it, which is occasioned by unbelief. It is by the means of the promises the heart is cleansed, 2 Cor. 7:1, and by the not believing them the heart is kept stuffed with that filth it had. † For it supposeth a want of faith, that intrinsic principle whereby we can only obtain help and remedy against sin. The word cannot be operative, because there is not faith to believe. Had not Adam believed that promise God made him after his first infidelity, of the seed of the woman, he had approved of his former unbelief, and rejected God's design of restoring him to his service and duty; which every son of Adam doth, that complies not with the performance of that promise. God's end in sending Christ was to bruise the serpent's head; unbelief would either shield his head, or apply a plaster to it for a cure.

[4.] Unbelief maintains every sin in strength. Unbelief being a departing from the living God, the further the separation from God, the stronger the empire and tyranny of sin. For as grace is most vigorous when faith is most firm, so, on the contrary, sin must be strongest when unbelief is most powerful. It is the great support and pillar of the devil's kingdom, which must totter and fall to the ground if this did expire. So much strength, therefore, as unbelief hath in any, so much strength hath every sin, which either the constitution inclines to, or the temptation allures to. It is the protector of every sin, which would else lie bare to the strokes of the Spirit. As faith is a shield against the darts of the devil, Eph. 6:16, so this is a shield against the sword of the Spirit. Faith is 'the victory whereby we overcome the world,' 1 John. 5:4. Unbelief is the victory whereby the world and every sin overcomes us. There is no unbeliever but, being in his natural condition, hath the strength of all sin in his heart lying in garrison. Where unbelief reigns, the heart is evil, Heb. 3:12; though this strength is not always in exercise, as the forces of a garrison are not always in action; restraining grace may check it, but nothing but faith can kill it. Not one sin could maintain its ground without unbelief. This, as a stout general, spirits the whole army. No sin can receive its death's wound till this Goliath be laid grovelling in the dust; then doth the army of the Philistines lose both their hopes and courage. Sin, indeed, may suffer some damage by moral considerations, and the soul be wrought upon by some affectionate discourses; but as long as this champion stands in defence, sin will not be utterly defeated: it will rally and recover its ground; for while the main cause of drawing back from God continues, the effect will follow upon occasion. And, therefore, when men, after much profession, glowing affections, and godly reformations, and continuance some time in them, fall back again to their old styles, you may conclude they never had faith, which would have wounded their lusts with a deadly blow, as well as moral considerations curbed them with a weak bridle. Such reformations proceed from a work upon the affections, not upon the judgment, which perhaps hath a suspicion that the things of the gospel may be true, but never was possessed with an entire belief of the truth of them. Unbelief is the

purveyor to feed sin, and the protector to defend it. As faith grows, all other sins decay; as unbelief grows, all other sins, by virtue of that, maintain their standing.

[5.] It excites all kind of sin in the heart. As the gospel received by faith opposeth all sin, 'teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus 2:12, so this principle, opposite to the gospel, teacheth us to cherish all sin. As the more faith is exercised, the more other graces traverse the stage (for as they depend upon faith in regard of their being, so they do also in regard of their exercise), so the more unbelief is exercised, the more all kind of sin is stirred up and quickened in the heart. As the gospel is enriched with all motives and directions to what is righteous before God, and comely before man, wherein whatsoever hath moral beauty, or is of honourable esteem among men, that desire to walk according to right reason, is commended and pressed with the highest injunctions, which, if observed by men under the gospel, would make the earth a paradise, restore the honour of God, and the beauty of the creation. So unbelief disgraceth these principles, degrades them from that esteem they deserve in the hearts of men, discountenanceth that which is spiritually noble and worthy, alarms the corrupt nature, brings the force of it into the field against the principles of the gospel. Therefore, where the gospel doth not refine and reform men by the operation of faith, men are rendered worse, more awkward towards God, and spiritually wicked by the operation of unbelief, which is, per accidens, the effect of the gospel; as physic that doth not work and expel the humours, gives them advantage to rage more in the body. As the gospel profits when mixed with faith, so it is wholly unprofitable when mixed with unbelief. Sin thereby draws rather an encouragement from it, and takes occasion from thence to become more furious. Hence is that rage commonly against the gospel, when it comes into any place where before it was not. The devil works by the unbelief of man to excite all the strength of corrupt nature against it, to stop the course of it; and what hath been done in the world in the times of the apostles, and will be done to the end of the world, is a picture of what men do secretly in their own hearts

against the principles of it, by the strength of their infidelity, which stirs up all the serpentine principles in the heart against it.

[6.] It denies all that evil which God hath testified that there is in sin. When God, by the sending of Christ, hath witnessed to the world what a boundless filth there is in sin, that could not be washed off by oceans of blood, or purged by the firing of the whole world, or pardoned upon the solicitations of men and angels, no, nor can by the intercession of the Son of God, without his death too; as faith by closing with Christ, and the terms of the gospel, acknowledgeth all this evil in sin, so unbelief, by rejecting him, avows the contrary, regards that as good which God declares to be the greatest evil, respects that as comely which God hath declared to be most loathsome and monstrous, prefers its own judgment of sin before the holiness and judgment of God, which he hath manifested of it in the death of Christ.

(5.) Unbelief possesseth the choicest faculties of the soul. Other sins are more seated in the sensitive appetite: this in the understanding and will. Other vices may arise from the humours of the body; anger and pride owe their birth to a predominant choler; wantonness and lust to a fulness of blood; laziness and idleness stream from a lake of phlegm; fearfulness, jealousy, covetousness, and envy, from a dusky melancholy; but unbelief ariseth from the ignorance of the understanding and perversity of the will, and most from the latter, where it hath its principal seat: John 5:40, 'You will not come to me that you might have life.' In the proposal of the gospel there are two things to be considered, the truth and the goodness; under which double consideration it is proposed. As it is true, faith embracing it, and unbelief rejecting it, are in the understanding; as it is good, faith entertaining it, and unbelief refusing it, are in the will. The falsity and ignorance of unbelief is subjectivè in the mind. Contraries are conversant about the same subject. Faith is in the understanding, and therefore infidelity, which is opposite to it, is in the same subject; the malice of unbelief is in the will, as the principal act of faith, whereby it receives Christ, is in the will. A man's wilfulness is

the cause that he doth not believe; he doth not believe because he will not believe. That is a great sin which possesseth the supreme faculties, and taints them more than any; and the more of the will is in any sin, the blacker is that sin.

(6.) It is most odious to God. If he delights in 'them that hope in his mercy,' Ps. 33:18, he must abominate them that think scorn to entertain it. It would bar God from all opportunities of dispensing his chiefest goodness; the fullest fountain would run in vain, and the richest feast be in vain provided. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God,' Heb. 11:6. Though a man had the quintessence of all the moral virtues that any heathen was ever enriched with, no man can please God but by Christ, no man can have Christ but by faith. Those therefore that hear of Christ, and embrace him not in the whole latitude as he is proposed as an object of faith, are the highest displeasers of God. Without some sort of faith it was impossible to please God, even in a state of innocence; Adam could not observe a precept, fear a threatening, nor hope in a promise, unless he believed him.* But unbelief, since Christ is proposed, contains in it the greatest ingratitude to God, when God prevents the creature by the offers of love, and when God is offended, yet seeks reconciliation, not only with those who have offended him and begin to cease from it, but with those that actually offend him while he is seeking peace with them, 'when we were yet sinners,' Rom. 5:8. Men are called while they are actually in arms. Christ doth most reprove his disciples for this; they had ambition and passion, many infirmities; yet we find our Saviour chiding them for nothing but their unbelief, or, at least, not so severely, Mark 16:4, and 9:19, Luke 24:25. He upbraids those cities wherein mighty works were done, 'because they believed not.' God was most angry with Moses for his unbelief. This affronts God most; this is the object of his greatest anger and greatest hatred, and therefore the greatest sin.

Use. If unbelief be the greatest sin.

I. Of information.

1. We may here take a view of the infinite patience and condescending grace of God, to those that have a weakness of faith with a great mixture of unbelief.

(1.) His patience. This sin being so black as hath been described, a reproaching him in all his attributes, and Christ in his gracious design, worse than the unbelief of the Jews, much of the same nature with the first sin of the devils, it is a wonder of patience that God suffers such a mountain of sin to cumber the ground, since it reacheth as high as heaven and dares the glorious throne of God, that God should not cut off those thorns which are continually galling him, and fling them into the fire. Man is not so impatient under anything as disgrace; God bears infinitely more reproaches by this sin than all the men in the world ever bore, yet he hath as infinite a patience to bear them as he hath power to punish them. None but a God could spare such affronting sinners, and endure so many scorns without evidences of wrath, and have an unwearied patience under such a wearying sin: Isa. 7:13, 'Will you weary my God also?' which is spoken of Ahaz his unbelief, as was explained in the beginning of the discourse.

(2.) His grace and condescension,

[1.] In the continuance of his gracious offers where the unbelief is total. Astonishing kindness! that after the first refusal of Christ, and repeated acts of infidelity, God should still call and cry, come down from heaven and knock; that grace should still solicit the sinner, when that, and all the train of attributes attending it, are thrust off and violently struck at by this sin. The first offer of Christ is a fruit of amazing grace, but the repetition after such indignities is more hyperbolical, when he quickens his solicitations of men under a sin of so high a provocation. Not any man possessed with the grace of faith but hath withstood many invitations, disgraced the wisdom, faithfulness, goodness, and holiness of God; accused him of the greatest falsity, represented him more base and deceitful than the worst of men or devils; and this after God hath raised the strongest

bulwark against it, and given the fullest assurance to make void their suspicions of him; himself contriving redemption, his Son acting it, his Spirit applying it, as if all their employment were about this affair; yet they have maintained their incredulity. When we consider this, and the doubts and jealousies when we first set foot toward heaven, we cannot cease from wonder that ever God should receive us.

[2.] In his gracious communications where there is a partial unbelief. It is admirable that when this, though partial, is such a reflection upon God, that he doth not alter his methods, forbear the communications of his grace, when we are often doubting of the stability of that grace. He is firm to his truth in the midst of men's falseness to him, Rom. 3:3; the unbelief of men shall not make the faith or fidelity of God of none effect; the unbelief of that nation did not hinder his entrusting his oracles with them. As the truth of God was immutable to those that believed of the Jewish nation, though the unbelief of the most was very gross, so he will be faithful to the believer, though there be a mixture of the sin contrary to that faith wherewith he is endowed. Moses and Aaron believed not God to sanctify him, Num. 20:12. Moses his unbelief was great, in striking the rock twice when he should have but spoken to it; yet God was so gracious as not to deny that effect to his unbelief which he had assured to his faith; he stopped not the influence of his power, though Moses had weakened the hand of his faith; 'he caused waters to gush out of the rock abundantly,' ver. 11. When this hath put forth itself in act, God hath been so indulgent as to repeat his promise for the strengthening of a fainting faith. When Abraham, after a twofold promise, Gen. 12:2, 13:16, began to question God's truth, because he did not yet see the seed promised him, and his years increased, Gen. 15:3, 'What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' a, querulous speech, discovering an act of infidelity immediately after a third gracious promise from God, ver. 2, 'Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' To this his answer seems to be, 'What reward wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the Saviour of the world is not like to come out of my loins, since I have

not that seed promised so long since? God doth not chide him for this so severe a charge, but graciously renews his promise and strengthens his faith, vers. 3–6, 'He that shall come forth out of thy own bowels shall be thy heir; and thy seed shall be as the number of the stars.' And when after this no seed came so suddenly as he expected, he listens to Sarah's counsel and goes in to Hagar, Gen. 16:4, as if he was resolved to wait upon the promise no longer; yet God is so far from stripping him of that glorious title of father of the faithful, that he condescends to shore up his faith by a new promise, Gen. 17:1, 2, &c.; and the more to strengthen his drooping faith, changeth his name Abram into Abraham,* which signifies a father of my people, that he might remember the promise every time he should think of his name. It was given him after his distrust of the former promises in the business of Hagar. David takes notice of the indulgence of God to him in this case, when his diffidence of God hath hurried him so far as positively to assert that he was 'cut off from before the eyes of God,' Ps. 31:22, that God had no more kindness for him, or remembrance of his own promise, 'yet nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.' Though he had had so many promises from God of a kingdom, yet he said in his haste all men were liars, Samuel too, and in that reflected upon God, whose errand Samuel delivered. Some of those weapons brandished against me will one time or other reach me, and little hold is to be taken of the words of the prophets, which are but a pack of lies; yet as long as he left not praying, God left not answering. Scarce a gracious answer a good man hath but he may put a nevertheless to it, because of that distrust of God which is mixed with his petitions. When by a partial unbelief, starting from us, we question his truth, bespot his wisdom, forget his kindness, have low thoughts of his sufficiency; yet all the aggravations in this sinful act (if there be a true faith, as a grain of mustard seed), silence not the voice of his bowels, dam not up the torrent of his love, he will take occasion from thence to magnify his grace. When Peter seemed to have had his little faith covered with the rubbish of his unbelief, and the faith of the disciples seemed to be dead and buried, with the apprehension of Christ by the Jewish officers, he was then going to pay their debts,

redeem their souls, bind up their bones, and make an everlasting peace between God and them. And when Thomas persisted still in his infidelity of the resurrection of Christ, he doth not only shew himself to him with particular evidences of the reality of his resurrection in the marks of his hands and feet; but inspires him with a particular sentiment of his Deity, which no man before did so explicitly acknowledge: John 20:28, 'My Lord, and my God.' Not that unbelief is a motive to Christ to do so, but he will take occasion from it to make his grace triumph over the worst of sins. Since the nature of this sin is full of so horrid a malignity, it makes the condescensions and indulgence of God appear more admirable.

2. Information. Here is a high encouragement to faith and acceptance of Christ. We cannot sin worse by coming to him than by not believing in him. How many stave themselves off from an acceptance of God's offers by a sense of their own unworthiness! Suppose it were an offence to approach to him with a humbled unworthiness, can there be that blackness in it as there is in drawing back from him? We do not then fling dirt in the face of those attributes which were illustrious in the work of redemption; we do not then blemish his truth, and represent him as one that hath no care of his royal word; we debase not the credit of his promise, nor do we cast any aspersion upon his wisdom, or go about to frustrate the design of his contrivance, nor do we vilify his grace, or spurn at his beating heart, nor count the unsearchable riches of his mercy as loathsome dung. Nor do we disparage the power of God, as if he could not be as great and as good as his word; nor do we declare that we can shift well enough without him, neither do we strike at his sovereignty in contradicting his fixed will and royal law of faith, nor do we rob him of his delight; nor do we pierce our Saviour afresh, nor vilify the price he paid for our redemption; we deny not his love, his wisdom, his excellency, sufficiency, or reward; we cast no dirt in the face of the contriver and executor of redemption. But all this we do in as gross a manner as if we should verbally disown him, if we believe not. Nor can our sins be diminished one article in their guilt by keeping from him. Can we pay the debt out of our small revenue?

A farthing a year cannot pay the interest of a thousand pound, much less the principal. Doth God command us to believe in Christ? Why should we disobey our God, add a greater weight to our load? Have we not sinned against justice, wisdom, common providence? Shall we draw the black colours of unbelief over all the rest, and despise all his attributes in a higher manner by refusing the blood of his Son, which his love offers us? Can we lessen our sins by turning our backs upon his bowels, and have the fruit of the death of Christ by endeavouring to disappoint him of the end of it? Is it not, then, an encouragement to us to come over to Christ by faith, since in doing it we come out of the territories of the most malignant sin, and the most desperate enemy of God, and pay the honour which is due to his glorious perfections from every creature?

3. How unworthy is the carriage of every unbeliever! He is digging at the very foundation of the throne of grace. The delights of Christ were among the sons of men, yet naturally we run from him as if it were a death to be with him, as if he were our greatest enemy. We cannot pull God out of heaven, we cannot nail Christ again to the cross, we cannot pierce his heart with a spear, we cannot revile him to his face as the Jews did; but slighting the purchase of his death, despising the conditions upon which it is to be enjoyed, disowning his authority granted by heaven over us, is the only thing, and it is too much, that we do against him. This every unbeliever doth; he despoils him, as much as in him lies, of his reward; frustrates the design of his suffering, the expiation of sin, the propagation and observation of his evangelical law. He that disowns and would destroy the dearest thing Christ hath left in the world, that which he gave the greatest charge for the preservation of, would act all the villanies against his person were he again in the world. He doth as much as the devil himself can do. All that he can do is to trample upon his law, increase the unbelief of men in the world. He can do no more, and every unbeliever doth as much: 'The lusts of your father you will do,' John 8:44.

The dignity of Christ's person greatens the enormity of unbelief, because 'he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,' John 3:18. It outrageth not a man, nor an angel, but the only Son of God, in the truth of his word, the majesty of his person, the greatness of his undertaking, and the kindness of his sufferings.* God hath but one Son, and him it despiseth, and in his person contemns the Father. It is no less than marriage to his Son that he propounds when he offers Christ; and who would not contemn[†] the carriage of a beggar, that should refuse being a prince's spouse? This is to refuse the imitation of angels who worship him, for the imitation of devils who hate him.

Now the carriage of unbelief to God in Christ is,

1. Irrational.
2. Ingrateful.
3. Inexcusable.
4. Miserable.

1. Irrational. (1.) In those that own not the gospel as a revelation of God, which many of the heathen philosophers regarded as a piece of folly, 'to the Greeks foolishness,' 1 Cor. 1:23; they could not imagine a crucified God, or so little affection in God to an only Son, as to let him be put to death, and an infamous death too. But, alas! they had more unreasonable notions of their gods than this could possibly appear to be. It is true, their notions are exploded out of the world, but we may thereby see how unreasonable men are in the rejecting the gospel upon any principles whatsoever. They talk of their adulterous gods, their cheating Mercuries, hectoring Marses, and lustful Venuses, and of gods wounded in battles. Is not a dying God for the ends of virtue, more reasonable than an adulterous god for the ends of vice? Is not a God pierced for the happiness of mankind, and preservation of human nature, more reasonable than a god wounded in skirmishes? Is it not as reasonable to be believed that

God should become man, as a man become a god? which was a notion frequent among them in their deifying men; but none now have such gross conceits of the divine Majesty. But as some scarce own the being of a God, so they quite disown the design and reasonableness of the gospel, which is as ancient as the world within a few hours, transmitted from one age to another by a succession of promises, frequency of prophecies, all centring in, and receiving their accomplishment in Christ. So that if any will receive the ancient testimonies of the prophets, which no reasonable man can deny, there being more clear evidence of the antiquity of the books of the Old Testament, than for any writing whatsoever, owned by the heathens to have something divine in it, and preserved by the Jews' enemies, or that which they represented, and represented so clearly, that whosoever shall read of a Messiah to be cut off after sixty-two weeks, Dan. 9:26, from the building of the temple, and that to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to put an end to any prophecy of the Messiah, the Jews not being able to shew one prophet since the crucifying of Christ; whosoever shall read the 53d of Isaiah, of the tender plant without comeliness, despised and rejected of men, acquainted with grief, carrying our sorrows, bearing iniquity, oppressed and not opening his mouth, making his grave with the wicked, and the rich in his death, making his soul an offering for sin, and after having a portion divided with the great, because he poured out his soul to death; whoever shall read the prophecy of one pierced, one born in Bethlehem, 'whose goings out were from everlasting,' Micah 5:2, and afterwards consider the story of our Saviour's life and death, cannot reasonably deny that this is the very person described in the prophecy.* Whosoever shall consider the prophecies of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and the sanctuary, with a flood of desolation, Dan. 9:26, after the cutting off the Messiah, and see that people now without a king, without a prince, or high priest, an image, an ephod, without a sacrifice, Hosea 3:4 more years than ever both their temples stood, must reasonably conclude it a fruit of their own wish, that the blood of him whom they would not own as their Messiah, might be upon them and upon their children, Mat. 27:25.

One great reason men do not believe the gospel, or believe in Christ, is because they are unacquainted with the prophetic part of Scripture. Buxtorf, in his *Synagoga Judaica*, conjectures this is a great reason of the Jews' obstinacy, they are so intent upon the law that they scarce mind the prophets; and Christ himself, in his rebuke of his disciples, intimates this, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken!' Luke 24:25. To deny a gospel that hath been propagated with a glorious success, confirmed by a train of miracles, acknowledged in the writings of the heathens who lived in the primitive times, witnessed by the blood of martyrs, and those of the wiser and learned sort, who could not all surely be a parcel of melancholy fools! And shall this have no better a reception, than if it were a mere romance, and an impertinent fable? Common reflections upon ourselves after this revelation, will lead us to think some divine stamp upon it. It is obvious to a considering rationalist, that man is not upon a right basis, that he is strangely amiss, that it is inconsistent with the goodness and holiness of God, to let man come in such a posture at first out of his hands. He sees how little he can determine anything with certainty in his understanding, that he hath not that affection to God which nature will teach him he ought to have, that he doth not glorify God as his own reason will inform him he ought to do; he must conclude, that if ever divine goodness hath designed and revealed a way for the restoration of man to his service, the restoration of the world to the end of his glory, for which it was created, he can find nothing that doth propose it, promise it, and assure it, but the gospel. But let such that disown the gospel consider (and though perhaps there are none here that opinionatively are infidels, yet there is no man but hath some motions sometimes against the authority of the gospel, as well as atheistical thoughts against the being of a God, which need sometimes some consideration to stop the tide); I say, let them consider, that those things they prefer before the gospel, are not in their own account of any great and durable worth; they cannot attend any beyond the gate of death; some thing there is of concern in another world; the opinions they entertain have as little ground of certainty, as anything else which the gospel doth not declare. The

best account of things, with the most likely reason that ever was extant, is in the Scripture; for there is nothing seems to be wanting for the glory of God, and the duty and happiness of a creature. And therefore it is but a reasonable proposal that we should entertain that, and conform our judgments and practices to it, till we meet with a better account, that makes more for the divine honour and the creatures' welfare. If any scheme more satisfactory for such high and glorious ends can be proposed, it is fit it should be entertained. But till such a one be found out, and have as many, and as manifest confirmations as this hath had, it is reason that till then this should have the pre-eminence. Who, that were under a raging disease, would not use the best remedy he could find, till he met with a better? For as it is unreasonable for any man to deny that debt of obedience he owes to God as Creator, so it is unreasonable to deny a rule to guide him in the way of obedience to, and worship of, God, till he can find one more rational in itself, more honourable for God, and more serviceable to the creatures' interest. Is it not unreasonable to require the same evidence in things of faith as in matters of nature? Is it not unreasonable to deny that which hath stronger arguments to back the authority of it, than what can be drawn from sense and reason, for the proof of the being of anything in the world? Is it not unreasonable for us to follow our own humours, fancies, purblind reason, groping for happiness in other things, while we refuse the way that hath the clearest characters upon it of anything in the world? It were worth our knowledge what religion such men would have, who will not believe the matter of the gospel; a religion it is supposed they would have, if they own the being of God; for a religious worship is a natural consequence from such an acknowledgment. The worship of the heathens cannot but appear ridiculous; there is not a man to be found, unless among the more stupid sort of nations, that will apologise for that. The Jewish cannot, according to the rules of that religion, be practised; for they cannot sacrifice, since they have no temple wherein to perform that service. Besides, sacrifices being practised in all nations, for the expiation of sin, it cannot be supposed that the blood of any creature can make atonement for the sin of the soul, or outward purifications by water

wash off the impurities of an immaterial spirit. The Mahometan is too sensual for any rationalist to embrace. There is none then left but the Christian to be embraced: the great command of that is faith; it forbids all those sins which moral nature loathes, and unbelief besides. The rule of it is the Scripture, and whatsoever is not according to that, whatsoever worship or doctrine men coin that is not according to that rule, is not religion, is not worship, it is no revelation of God.

(2.) No less irrational is it in those that own the gospel to be a divine revelation for such high ends, and do not in heart and practice subscribe to the goodness and methods of it. For men that hear the language of God, pretend they believe the voice of the gospel to be the voice of God, that Christ is the Son of God, that he shed his blood for a ransom for souls; yet not to accept of this ransom, to slight the benefit of it; not to conform to one of those conditions upon which it is offered; not leave a lust for Christ, or forego a pleasure for him; to believe no more than agrees with their humour, interest, or fancy,—this is a most unworthy carriage to God, and to a man's self, to pretend one thing, and do another; to profess an acknowledgment of it in our understandings, and refuse a subscription to it with our wills. It is a thousand times better for a man to strip himself of the name of a Christian, than to have a practical unbelief inconsistent with the truth of a Christian. With what face can a man profess Christ to be his Lord and master, and yet regard not any order he gives? The heathens will stand up in judgment against such a nation, for they will confide in their idols, believe and conform to their oracles: 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god,' Micah 4:5; and shall we deal worse with God than heathens did with idols? Shall we believe wicked men? why else do we make contracts and bargains? Shall we believe the earth? why else do we sow? Shall we believe the winds and waves? why else do we traffic? And is it not more reason to give credit to an infallible God? It is a great madness not to come up to the terms of that, which we confess is sealed by the blood of Christ, confirmed by the power of miracles, proclaimed by the apostles, admired by the angels, and confessed too by the devils

themselves to be from God. What more unreasonable than to profess that Christ was appointed by God to remove our miseries, relieve our wants, purchase our happiness, expiate our sin, procure our peace, which we could not find a way ourselves to obtain, had we been befriended by the wit of angels, yet not comply with any one condition upon which he offers those transcendent blessings? Profession of him without a sound faith in him, is like the pharisees' garnishing the tombs of the prophets, while they hated the Redeemer they prophesied of. Gilded Bibles will not serve the turn with leaden hearts; and is it not as unreasonable in an humble soul to doubt of mercy? Surely as unreasonable as in an impenitent sinner to presume upon it. What hath God commended more than his mercy? What pleaseth him more than an humble confidence in it? What offends him more than for such an one to distrust it? Have we not in Christ the greatest encouragements to faith and confidence, since he is so near us, of the same nature with us, and came from heaven on purpose to 'take not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,' Heb. 2:16, and felt the misery of our nature, Heb. 2:18, to the very end that he might have compassion on us; and hath offered himself up as a sacrifice for our sins? Shall not, then, that unbelief, that kicks against those foundations of hope, and disparages that which hath letters of commendation from heaven, be accounted an unreasonable thing?

2. It is also ungrateful. What else is it, to fly in the face of that love, which hath wrought out the way for us by blood? To slight him that would relieve us, wound him that would cure us; to live as if redemption had never been wrought, and disobey him for shewing love to us, is an ungrateful frenzy. When the Jews preferred Barabbas before Christ, and Judas valued thirty pieces of silver above him, was it not an ingratitude as well as an indignity? And is it not as great to value a soul murdering lust above him, to be allured by a beastly pleasure to offend him, rather than by the heart-blood of the Son of God to please him? How often do we see, when the sun riseth to comfort the drooping earth, the earth sends out vapours and mists, as if it scorned any assistance from that heavenly body, and

would strip it both of its life and influence, so necessary for the fruit it bears, and the inhabitants it nourisheth? Do not men send out the black vapours of their enmity and unbelief, at the appearance of the Sun of righteousness, as if they had a mind to choke in him all sentiments of kindness to them? Is not this unworthy, to dishonour him that would honour us, smite him who hath been wounded for us, pierce the heart of him who hath bled for our health? For 'by his stripes we are healed,' Isa. 53:5, as if the cup he had drunk for us were not bitter enough. What wounds he received, were for the satisfaction of God's justice, which was armed against him; what wounds our unthankful unbelief gives him, is to the disparagement of that satisfaction. God did not stick to send his Son, but the world sticks at receiving him. The world is lost in Adam; by the blood of his Son he finds them when they do not seek him, Isa. 65:1; and the unthankful world will not receive him when he offers himself to them, nor refuse it with a common civility; not so much as a No, I thank thee, in the case, which is common among men upon refusal of an offered kindness.

3. It is inexcusable. There is no plea for it. The Jews had some plea for theirs; he that was clothed with infirmities, and had no outward form or comeliness, nor any beauty and glory according to their expectations, might better indeed be 'despised and rejected' of them, Isa. 53:2, 3. What plea can we have, since he hath shaken off his infirmities, ascended to heaven in his majesty, hath propagated his gospel, and hath been honoured, one time or other, in every part of the then known world? They were under a law of riddles, could not well tell the meaning of the types that represented him; nor were the things the prophets spake clear to themselves, 1 Peter 1:10, 11, much less to the people. The curtains now are opened, the veil removed, the dusky cloud hath ended in a clear day; yet the ancient Israelites and patriarchs had many of them so much faith as will render our unbelief without any ground of apology. If those that lived under shadows and the star-light of ceremonies had so much sight, and so much faith, as is reckoned, Heb. 11, and proposed to us for an example and encouragement to run our race, and 'lay aside that sin

of unbelief, which doth so easily beset us,' Heb. 12:1, what plea can we have for our unbelief, since the Sun of righteousness hath scattered the shadows of the night, cleared up the face of the heavens, accomplished what they believed and wished for, destroyed him that had the power of death, rooted up the foundation of the devil's empire, and 'brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'? 2 Tim. 1:10. Their faith under shadows will render our unbelief under substance inexcusable.

4. How great will be the misery of unbelievers! The greatness of the misery will be proportionable to the greatness of the sin; it is a sin both against the law and against the gospel. By the law, we are bound to believe God, and whatsoever revelation he makes; we are bound to trust him, as he is a God of truth: by the gospel, we are bound to believe that Christ came into the world to lay down his life as a ransom. If the breach of the law makes us eternally miserable, the rejecting the gospel makes the wound the deeper, and the smart the sharper. No man refuseth the remedy, but he sharpens his wound. If the sins of men, who have no knowledge of the gospel, condemn, how much more shall the sins of those, who sin both against law and gospel, have a severer recompense of reward for neglecting salvation, and so great salvation? Heb. 2:2, 3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first was spoken by the Lord?' Refusing the covenant of grace, he puts himself upon the trial by a covenant of works; and what hope an exact law often transgressed can give a malefactor, is easy to imagine. Millions have perished by it, none can be secure in it: 'There remains no more sacrifice for sin,' if this be slighted, Heb. 10:26. They are not in so good a state as they had been if Christ had never died, but worse, for they have his blood to answer for, as well as sins against the natural and written law, and render themselves utterly unworthy of that grace they disparage. Because of this, the Jews were broken off; the refusing this cornerstone was the cause their foundations were tore up, and they hurled down, from being a people, to become the reproach of the world. Though God punished them for their sinful idolatries, yet he never rejected them till they rejected his Son, and then 'wrath came upon

them to the uttermost,' 1 Thes. 2:16; and our unbelief comes not short of theirs, but exceeds it. If we deny Christ, it is just he should deny us, Mat. 10:33. It is an equitable law to have the same measure meted to us that we mete to others. If unbelief oppose God, no wonder God will oppose and punish unbelief. No man can imagine but that God will be sensible of the wrong done to his bleeding Son, and our dying Redeemer. How can he be regardless of the contempt of his glorious nature, and let a final indignity to his majesty pass with impunity? An indictment will be brought against such by every abused attribute of God; all will condemn them, since all have been condemned by them; not one will appear as an advocate for them. Holiness must hate him that is filthy, and will not be otherwise; truth will be glorified in the execution of the gospel threatening, since the sinner would blemish it in not resting upon the promise, and observing the precept; justice will punish such as will not accept of the satisfaction appointed to be applied by faith; wisdom will frame a hell for them that despised the great masterpiece of it; power will be glorious in keeping them for ever under that punishment, and burning up the stubble that would rise up against it. As there is a power to save, so there is a 'glorious power' to destroy, 2 Thes. 1:9. When wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, truth, shall not be owned, in the glory of them, in Christ, they shall make themselves glorious upon him to the cost of the unbeliever; for God hath a sovereign right to the glory of his attributes; since the creature will not actively honour him, God will make him passively to glorify the perfections disparaged by him. The blood of Christ shed by this sin, in regard of an implicit approbation, cries with as loud a voice to God for vengeance as Abel's blood did against Cain, and to as good purpose, for he that heard the voice of the one, will not be deaf to the cry of the other. It speaks the language of mercy to him that receives it, and the roaring of justice to him that refuses it.

2. Use of exhortation.

Let us be sensible of the malignity in this sin. It being a sin against the gospel, we should be more sensible of it than of sins against the

law. Those are transgressions against a rule; this a transgression against a rule and a remedy. There is more reason we should be sensible of this, than if we had shed the most innocent blood, ravished the chastest bed, or made an explicit compact or covenant with the devil; these are sins mankind generally frown at, and think such persons fit to be thrown out of the society of mankind. Yet behold here an evil worse than all those singly or jointly considered in themselves. These are against the sovereignty of God, but not as this, a trampling upon the blood of his Son, infinitely above the most innocent creature. Those against the authority of God, this against his commanding authority and his condescending grace; those against common sentiments of nature, this against special revelations of a rich goodness. A murderer slays a man, an unbeliever crucifies a God; a thief robs a man of worldly goods, an unbeliever strips a God of his greatest glory; an adulterer defiles the bed of his neighbour, an unbeliever defiles a soul which is courted to be the spouse of God. Besides, unbelief is the breeder and fomentor of such sins which are committed by any under the light of the gospel.

1. Believers ought to be sensible of it. True faith is always attended with a sense of unbelief, a weariness under it, a longing to be rid of it. The poor man in the Gospel owned his faith, and yet confessed his unbelief with tears in his eyes, Mark 9:24. And are there not heaps of infidelity lie in our breasts? Is not the power of God sometimes distrusted, his goodness unregarded? Is Christ valued according to his transcendent worth? Do we always relish the excellency of the gospel? Do we never value and love a creature almost at the same rate we do the Creator and Redeemer? Are we not often more forgetful of God than we are of ourselves? Is not the word and oath of God too little sometimes to prop up a tottering faith? Are we not often more confident of men than we are of Christ, and bestow more credit upon the promises of men than we do on the promises of God? Do we always pay as much respect to God as we do to ourselves, as we do to men that shall die? How often do we find Christ complaining of the littleness of his disciples' faith, and the slowness

of their hearts to believe, which were the only Christian church then in the world? And are any of us yet got beyond the merit of such rebukes? Are there no scents of this sin in the most cleansed vessels? Have not the best here a partial unbelief? And can there be one grain of it in the heart, without a proportionable sinfulness of it? The least unbelief hath the sinful nature of unbelief, as well as the least grain of poison hath the nature of poison. So much as we want of a perfect faith, so much we strip God of the glory of his nature, blemish his truth, asperse his wisdom, slight his goodness, disgrace his sufficiency, snatch away his delight; so much as we want of a perfect faith, so much we pierce the Redeemer, null the work of his mediation, undervalue the price of redemption; so much we deny those choice affections which engaged him in the undertaking and were illustrious in the execution, so much we deny the excellency of his person and design, so much we grieve him, so much we dishonour him. If all this be clearly in a total unbelief, it is some degrees in a partial unbelief, and every act of it. And ought this to be suffered in the heart without sense, shame, confusion, and deep humiliations? Let us pour out our tears for it, as we have poured out our Saviour's blood by it. The fat of a sacrifice, which was a part without sense, was to be consumed by fire; so should we endeavour that our insensibleness should be wholly burned up by the Spirit.

2. Those that are yet in a state of unbelief ought much more to be sensible of it; that we may not deceive ourselves, and raise hopes contrary to the word, to bless ourselves when God curseth. Without a sense of this there is no meeting can be between Christ and us. It is as much a bar to any gracious work in our souls, as it was in the days of his flesh to many mighty works in his own country, Mat. 13:58. Every man that sits under the gospel is bound to believe the divine truths revealed therein; he is bound to believe his infection by original sin, and that the curses of the law are due to him; he is bound to believe that God hath sent his Son to be crucified for the sins of men that believe in him; that repentance and turning from sin is a necessary duty; he is bound to repent, forsake sin, and with a contrite heart cast himself upon Christ, expecting salvation from

him, and resolving sincerely to observe his commands, renounce his own righteousness, and rely upon his power; and therefore ought to be sensible of this obligation, and of that which is contrary to it and keeps him from performing it. A sense of this sin will lead the way to a sense of all the rest; this once quelled, the others expire; the death of the mother viper is the destruction of the young litter.

(1.) Christ was most sensible of this sin in others; should not we, then, be sensible of it in ourselves? It was a great part of his sorrow that men refused him, and would not accept of him, and salvation by him, Luke 19:42. It made him sigh more pathetically, and made him speak as if he were weary of all his pains: Luke 9:41, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?' His anger was for the most part raised against this, and this only; and still it must, upon the same account, be more painful to Christ than all the thorns which were upon his head, and wound him more deeply than the nails did his hands and feet. Should we not, then, write after our Master's copy?

(2.) It is a sin easy to be slipped into by a believer. Man is born with jealousies of God, which cause a distance, and render our particular closing with him more difficult. Sin in the nature makes us suspect every approach of God to be for our hurt: Luke 5:8, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' The best have not been free from unbelieving starts against God. David had a desperate reflection on God: 1 Sam. 27:1, that he should 'one day perish by the hands of Saul.' Though God had assured him of the possession of the kingdom, and daily experiences of God's providence in his preservation under the pursuits and armies of Saul might have confirmed him, yet he feared that some of the stones flung at him might reach him, and make him incapable of the designed royalty. Asaph, too, in regard of his spiritual condition, questions the mercy and faithfulness of God: Ps. 77:3–8, 'Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore?' The interrogation is at least a questioning of it, because, ver. 10, he acknowledgeth it to be his infirmity, which he would not have entitled his subscription to the eternal mercy of God, and the

truth of his promise. We should therefore be sensible of that unbelief which yet remains in our natures, that we may be preserved against the encroachments of it.

(3.) No man can labour for faith till he be affected with the sinfulness of unbelief. The sense of this is the first step to faith. We cannot have a sight of the amiableness of a moral virtue, till we are sensible of the deformity of the vice which stands in opposition to it. A conviction of the sinfulness and misery of unbelief will make us endeavour after the grace and happiness of faith.

(4.) Nor can any reformation secure us while we remain insensible of the evil of this. Conviction of other sins leaveth a man in his natural state as it found him. All men that are not sensible of this, though convinced of all their other guilt, are in a state of sin. It is the work of the Spirit to convince men of it if they do not believe. Reformation takes away the ill savour of our lives, which made us stink above ground; yet the life may be reformed, and the state not changed, but be as deplorable as before. Though atheism and profaneness may be left, yet a man by that is no more a member of Christ, and of the family of God, without faith, than he was when he was besmeared with his grossest vices; no more than the moral Jews were, to whom Christ denounceth a dying in their sins because of their unbelief, John 8:21. The guilt of all former sins cleaves to the soul under a new life, till upon faith in the blood of Christ it be wiped off. We are still in God's debt-book, without one farthing of our score crossed out; for God must have his satisfaction, either from Christ or ourselves. He hath none from Christ for us while we remain in unbelief; it is not applied to us or pleaded for us; no remedy for this disease but in the blood of Christ, and no way of having that blood sprinkled upon us but by faith. Reformations garnish our lives, but the soul remains still unsanctified if unbelief reigns. That clears the outward rubbish, but doth not cleanse the inward sink. No true sanctification without Christ; for 'in him we are sanctified,' 1 Cor. 1:2. Faith only is the band that unites us to him, whereby we get cleansing virtue from him. As faith only engrafts us into Christ, so unbelief alone keeps us off from

that bottom; as by this engrafting our actions become good, so without it our best actions are bad. An ignorant heathen may as well please God as a painted unbeliever, Heb. 11:6; this sin makes us utterly incapable to please God. The world is apt to lie under this error; because they have amiable qualities in the eye of man, they think they have no spot in the eye of God; but, alas! this doth render us more deformed in the eye of God, than all outward reformations can render us beautiful.

2. As we ought to be sensible of it, so we should watch against it. This is a lesson for believers. It is easy to distrust God; our own hearts have dealt treacherously with him, and therefore we think he will requite us in our own kind. Let us watch against the first motions of it, because the devil by them endeavours to draw us to it. As all good works spring from faith, so all evil works from a defect in it. If there be a disturbance in the heart, other members cannot well do their office. Habitual faith lays the first stone of a heart sanctification—'their hearts purified by faith,' Acts 15:9—and every act of faith raiseth it higher. So much of unbelief, so much of impurity; watch therefore against everything that may weaken the foundation of your sanctification. Unbelief only makes us sink under a temptation. Jacob wrestled with an angel, or with the Son of God; yet still kept up his faith in God's promise against the fear of his brother, and became a conqueror, Gen. 32:24, &c.; Hosea 12:4. Jacob's fight was a corporeal conflict,* because his thigh did shrink with his wrestling; but it was also a fight of faith. Why else should the angel so value a corporeal wrestling, as to give him a new name thereupon, and call him Israel, because he had prevailed with God? Besides, who can think a poor mortal could overcome an angel with an assumed body in a corporeal wrestling? It was an internal conflict of the spirit of Jacob with God, and the external wrestling was only a symbol of the inward contest. As he wrestled against a man by the strength of the body, so he wrestled against distrust by the strength of his spirit. For Jacob hearing of his brother Esau's march against him, and remembering his cruel threatening upon his forestalling the blessing, he was afraid of the ruin of himself and family, and consequently that

the promised seed should be extinguished; and therefore wrestles with God upon the account of his promise, desiring him to defend his family from Esau's fury. Unbelief sinks us under devils, faith makes us wrestle with God. In case of any fall into sin, watch against this master sin.† Though our fall calls for sorrow, it calls not for unbelief. To throw off an humble faith, is to gratify the author of sin, the devil, by despair and unbelief, but doth not please him that wrought the redemption; this is to heap a mountain of sin upon the former. If a man sin, it is not said presently we have a devil to destroy, but an advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John 2:1. Watch therefore against every stirring of it upon all occasions; and the more since you have found how gracious Christ hath been, and that your former unbelief could not dispute away his grace, and send it back to heaven from whence it came. Let not a distrustful heart have more credit with you than a Saviour's promise. And that we may watch against it, let us think meanly of ourselves. He that esteems himself something, will quickly esteem Christ as nothing. Regard the things of the gospel as the most substantial things, of the greatest moment. Let the word dwell more richly in us than the notions of nature. Meditate often on it; rest not upon the knowledge we have by education, consider things in their reasons, not by interest or affection, without Scripture reason; work such arguments upon the mind as may strengthen the assent to the word; weak consents of will spring from imperfect assents in the understanding. The deeper truths are in our understandings by an explicit, and formal, and renewed assent, the warmer and stronger will they be in our affections and will; every wind or violent storm will blow down a house that is weak in its foundation. There is an 'assurance of understanding' precedes the 'acknowledgment of the mystery of the gospel,' Col. 2:2. The fuller the assurance of understanding, the closer the affiancing of the will; a floating cork cannot be stable. Be well acquainted with the nature, terms, and riches of the covenant of grace, the mediation of Christ, his offices, the ends and fruits of his death. This is the way to watch against unbelief, so great a sin. This is necessary. As Christ will do no more miracles without faith, so the

devil can do no mischief without unbelief. The more of faith, the closer our union, and the fuller our communications.

3. Let such as are in a state of unbelief endeavour to come out of it. We shall then lay by the most offensive sin, the object of God's greatest hatred, the dishonour of his attributes, the main prop of the devil's empire. We shall not till then please him; nor will he sheathe his sword, nor open his bowels. We then approve of the counsel of God, who is as tender of the honour of his Son as of his own; for he will have 'all men honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John 5:23. It will be the best return we can make to Heaven for the message of joy heaven hath sent to us in the gospel. The success of the gospel in the heart doth cheer the heart of Christ in his exaltation, as well as the news of it did in his humiliation: Luke 10:21, 'he rejoiced in spirit.' This is the way to add another throne for him to sit upon (as every believing heart is), instead of pulling him from what he had. None but an unbeliever is despised by God; no man but an unbeliever shall ever taste of his fury. Hath not God often by his Spirit entreated us to consider what is for our peace? Hath he not met us, and instead of offering to kill us, as the Lord did to Moses, he hath opened his heart, shewed us the wounds of his Son, desired nothing of us but that we would believe he had a design of kindness for us, and that we would give him such an entertainment as his affection doth deserve; that we would give credit to his assertion, and walk according to it? He complains only of your drawing back from him; he never quarrels with any man for sucking the breasts of his goodness; his only grief is, that you will not come, that you might have life. And can the spurning his grace be a means to our blessedness, or this desperate sin instate us in the glory of heaven? Shall the lions be ashamed to tear Daniel, and an unbeliever not ashamed spiritually to tear his Redeemer? Shall the ox know his owner, and man not know his crucified Saviour? Shall the stones rend in pieces at his death, and our hearts stand unshaken at his sufferings for us? Doth not God denounce a woe to them that remember not the afflictions of Joseph? Can any less be expected by those that increase the afflictions of Christ, and kick against the

greatest design God had to honour himself? Doth not our nature gasp for a felicity? Is it not the sole inquiry of man, 'Who will shew us any good?' And when the gospel presents us with the most satisfactory blessedness, shall we resist it, and shut our eyes against the light that would conduct us to bliss? If we will dishonour God by unbelief, we shall vilify our hopes; were the gospel of no concernment to us, yet unbelief in regard of the Author of it were a sin worthy of the sharpest reproof. A belief of him we owe to him as creatures; but when it is of the greatest moment to our souls to believe the gospel, as that whereupon depends eternal happiness or misery, shall any of us that acknowledge it to be of God, that hath been bred up in the midst of its light, be so cruel to our souls as to make light of the conditions of it? It is unreasonable, as it dishonours our Creator, for whose glory we were made; as it disgraceth our Redeemer, by whose blood we are ransomed; uncharitable to ourselves, by murdering our souls, to which we owe the greatest care. Or dare any persist in this way, and venture heaven and blessedness upon a conceit that the gospel is not true? What hurt can there be in believing it? An eternal mischief may be in refusing it. There is no dishonour to God by believing it; we own one God by acknowledging it; we own whatsoever is comely and praiseworthy, by the rational sentiments of mankind, in regard of the precepts. By casting it behind our backs, we hazard ourselves if it may be true; we destroy ourselves if it be absolutely true. A resolution to persist in unbelief is such that no man in his wits would ever think of.

4. Let such as are got out of the sink of this sin, bless God and prize their faith. God only dispersed that cloud of darkness which seized upon you, and drew you out of that mire, hateful to Heaven, wherein your hearts were soaked. What a gulf hath God delivered you from! He might have left you in that state, so reproachful to himself and so dreadful to you. Prize your faith above all your treasures; above all keeping, preserve and strengthen it. Before you could not but displease him, now you may be a pleasure to him; before you warred with every perfection of his nature, now you join issue with him in the exalting of them. By this you are interested in the fruit of his

glorious counsels, the blood and mediation of his Son, the glory of his attributes. By this he snatcheth you from a league with hell, sets you above the head of the captain of unbelievers, knits your hearts to himself, and fits you to be monuments of his grace, to be placed with him for ever in heaven.

A DISCOURSE OF THE MISERY OF UNBELIEVERS

He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.—JOHN 3:36.

THESE words are a part of the discourse of John Baptist to his disciples, which contains a summary of the gospel, and treats of the dignity of Christ's person. The occasion of the discourse is a question stated Between the disciples of John Baptist and the Jews about purification: ver. 25, 'There arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying;' what the question was is not fully and plainly recorded. Some think the ceremonial purifications appointed in the Mosaic law were the subject of the contest. But the next verse (ver. 26) intimates the question to be concerning the baptism of Christ and John Baptist, which of them was the most efficacious for purification. Some preferred John's baptism in regard of his priority of time, he being first sent to baptize, and in regard of Christ's receiving baptism from his hands; the other might assert the baptism of Christ to be as purifying as the other, because of the many miracles wrought by him to confirm his mission, which seeing the Baptist wanted (for he wrought no miracles, John 10:41), John's disciples being jealous of their Master's glory, and troubled at the lessening his authority, in the heat of their contest address themselves to John to be an arbitrator in this affair, as being best able to judge of that for which he was commissioned: ver. 26, 'And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.' The contest, it seems, had engendered in their hearts an envy against Christ, because of the multitude of his followers above what their master had, who, they saw, was decreasing upon the other's rising, as the light of the stars is obscured by the appearance of the sun. They frame their relation to

John with a contempt of Christ and a charge against him, as if they intended to incense their master against our Saviour. The contempt is in the title they give him. When they speak of their master, it is Rabbi; when they speak of Christ, it is he that was with thee beyond Jordan, not vouchsafing to name him. How apt is man by nature to have low and mean thoughts of Christ in his heart! The charge here is double:

1. Usurpation. He baptizeth, he invades thy office, and takes upon him that function which belongs properly to thee, and after he seemed to enter himself thy disciple, by receiving baptism at thy hands, now is ambitious of an equal authority with thee, without a call or any order from thee, and baptizeth in his own name.

2. Ingratitude. He to whom thou barest witness, and by that eulogy gavest him an authority among the people who relied upon thy word. Now he endeavours to obscure thy glory, and hath forgot the obligation he had to thee by giving him so worthy a character. They thought John's commendation of Christ arose from his humility, and not from a knowledge of the excellency of his person. And they urge it with the success of Christ, 'all men come to him.' He makes so great a progress that he will draw from thee all thy disciples, and diminish that honour thou hast gained among the people. By this means they endeavoured to inflame the Baptist against our Saviour, and cause him to change his note, and give such a character of him as might lessen his growing reputation; but they found their expectation defeated by the modest answer John returns to them.

Observe,

1. How do pride and passion often sway in the hearts of professors! The Baptist's disciples fear any disgrace of their master should redound upon themselves, and therefore endeavour to embroil him in contention. The disciples of Christ were not free from the like taint, when they were angry with one man's casting out devils, because he did not follow them, Luke 9:49. John by his humility

rejoices at the appearance of Christ, ver. 29; but his disciples' pride robs God of his present praise for sending the Messiah. We can never value any mercy of God while we value ourselves too much. What need have we to lay shackles upon the pride of nature, to watch over our passions, and restrain them within due bounds, that they may be serviceable to God and not to Satan! Grace must be upon its guard against the designs of the old Adam in us. The devil directed strong engines against the Baptist in the hands of his disciples, enough to batter him, without abundance of grace and an awakened exercise of it.

2. How often have pride and envy been the springs of the church's calamities! These two have been the incendiaries of the church as well as of the world. Pride in Adam overturned the worship of God in the world just after the creation, and envy in Cain made the first division after the promise, which led him to murder the holiest man, and afterwards drove him out from the presence of God. How little did those poor disciples think that in this they imitated the fallen angel! He envied God a service from man, and those envy Christ a glory from the creatures. How far will envy proceed if God do not stop it! Envy in Cain at the appearance of his brother's sacrifice first broached his brother's blood.

3. How forward are men to be drawn from Christ by an admiration of the gifts and graces of the saints!* They admire here the servant above the master. How long hath it been that the value set upon the saints thrust almost out any estimations of the mediation of Christ? Prayers to the virgin are become more numerous than supplications to the Son of God.

4. How dangerous is contention about ungrounded opinions! Had not John interposed, with what animosity against Christ had his disciples' hearts been filled upon this contest! The weeds would have grown strong, and taken deeper rooting, without a spiritual prevention. What is John's answer to this report? Religious, humble, and modest: ver. 27, 'John answered and said, A man can receive

nothing, except it be given him from heaven.' He is not inflamed with any pride and passion, but ascribes to God the glory of his sovereignty, and to Christ the dignity of his person. The words of John may be formed into this argument:* Every one is to be honoured in the place wherein God hath set him; God hath placed him you complain of in the highest dignity; you are therefore to count him for your Lord, and me for his servant. Do not think that that person you charge doth invade this office without a call; he could not have this success without the singular providence of God; you must regard the author and original; things are not in our own dispositions; whatsoever blessing is received, is dispensed by a sovereign authority. Do not think, therefore, that I will arrogate that honour to myself, which God never assigned me.

Observe,

1. God is the sovereign author of all good to men: James 1:17, 'Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.' All comes originally from him, whatsoever the channels of conveyance are, as rivers from the sea, whatsoever veins of earth they are strained through; all our springs are in God. Rest not, then, upon anything below, though it be never so choice a mercy; it is from above. Dart your eyes upward to the spring; what is not the source of our blessings, should not be the prop of our souls. Trust in other things hath a quite contrary effect to trust in God; the more we trust other things, the sooner we lose them; the more we trust God, the fuller we enjoy him. God will strip us of the comfort we take in them, when we strip him of the glory due to him. Praise God alone for any mercy; it is not fit the creature should run away with the praise of that which we enjoy at the cost of heaven. What stock could any have, if God had not set them up? Fear not man; whatsoever is from above shall prosper. If God gives the gospel, man cannot stop the progress of it. Heaven is able to maintain its own grants. It wants no more a power to preserve it, than goodness to bestow it.

2. The suggestions of Satan, and our own corrupt hearts to pride and envy, are to be bridled by the consideration of the sovereign disposal of God. This is the intent of the Baptist's answer. How loose and shaking would those lusts be in our hearts, if we were practically settled in this truth, that all dispensations are the fruit of the divine sovereignty! In envying man, we envy God the disposal of his own gifts; we invade his propriety, as if we had been God's partners in his own possession; we would bring God down to our humours, and make our fancies the rule of divine actions. We entrench upon his wisdom, as though he were not wise enough to dispose of his own goods; as though he should have asked our counsel, before he made a distribution of what is solely his own. It is a presumption to prescribe laws to our lawgiver. It is contrary to his goodness, as if we would tie the hands of his universal goodness, that it should run only into our cisterns. The consideration of the sovereignty and wisdom of God, would hinder us from being envenomed by this fiery dart.

3. Every man ought to be content in the place where God has set him. The will of our sovereign ought to be our rule; we are not our own carvers; let us rather bless God for what we have, than murmur that we have no more; since all are his gifts, he can better choose for us, than we for ourselves.

4. How doth the wise God defeat the devil, and extract the greatest good from his worst intentions, and the sins of men! The devil, by God's conduct, doth us good against his will. His tempting those disciples is the occasion of this excellent summary of the gospel, which we might have wanted had the devil restrained his temptation. The passions of those disciples are the occasion to produce the fullest testimony out of the mouth of John, of the dignity of Christ's person, the truth of his commission, fitness for his work, the necessity of address to him, the means of enjoying the benefits purchased by him. Thus the devil tempted Christ to conquer him, and God ordered it for fitting of our Saviour to relieve us with more compassion, from an experimental sense of his subtilty and our misery. Joseph's slavery in Egypt by his brothers' sin is the preservation of the church in

Canaan; and the crucifying the Son of God, the redemption of the world. Why should we distrust God, who can use the sins of men to clear up the way of salvation, both to ourselves and others?

After this introduction, the Baptist more particularly instructs them: ver. 28, 'Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him,' and opposes to their ambitious emulation his former testimony of Christ, and the doctrine they had heard from him, acknowledging him the Messiah, and himself but the herald or harbinger to prepare the way before him. I have often told you, as well as others, that I am not the Christ, intimating thereby that he it was whose glory was to outshine that of all the former prophets, since he was the grand prophet promised to the church. He retorts upon them their accusation of the ingratitude of Christ to him: Since I have given him such a testimony, as you well remember, that I did but baptize with water, but one coming after me was to baptize with the Holy Ghost; it is he you complain of is the person I meant; it is he to whom God hath given the Spirit not by measure; it is he that is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world; you cannot think I should be so foolish, as to deny my words. If you had respect for me, and good will to yourselves, you would have believed me and believed in him, since it is necessary for you so to do.

Observe,

How hard a matter is it to change the false opinions we have erected? These disciples had entertained a notion that their master was the Messiah; they dreamt of an earthly advancement by him, though he had made declarations to them, and in their hearing, to a committee sent from the Sanhedrim, that he was not the Christ, John 1:19, 20, yet that sentiment stuck in their heads. Pride makes men foster opinions against the glory of God, when they seem to conduce to their own interest; we are loath to submit our reasons to the wisdom of God. Man is a creature naturally apt to hold fast anything but divine truth. Bran will remain in the sieve, when the finest flour will

drop through. The disciples of Christ would not part with the sweet thoughts of an earthly grandeur under their Master, though he had so often given notices of his violent death. Let us examine everything well by the word, before we lodge it as a notion in our heads, and measure every proposal by the respect it bears to the glory of God, as well as to our own advantage.

He proceeds further to shew the difference between Christ and himself: ver. 29, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled;' as much as there was between a bridegroom, for whom the spouse is adorned and prepared, and a friend which served him in that occasion, who rejoiceth that he hath contributed to the satisfaction of his friend. I have prepared the people as a spouse for him; it is to him therefore they are to have recourse, him they are to love and honour; and it is my joy that I have rendered him any service, according to the commission I received from heaven:* intimating thereby, that they should follow his example, and be so far from envying the glory of Christ, which they imagined to be the obscurity of his, that they should rejoice, as he did, in hearing the bridegroom's voice. Some understand it of the marriage between the divine and the human nature of Christ; the divine being the bridegroom, the human the bride, which the divine nature assumed into union with itself. Most understand it of the marriage of Christ with the church, which was promised.

Observe,

1. Some evidence of the deity of Christ. He is the bridegroom that espouseth the church to himself. A thing promised by God to be done only by himself, Hosea 2:16, 19–20; it is Jehovah, the Lord, saith, 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever,' Jer. 3:14. The Scripture often compares the union of the church with God to that of a marriage, and never gives the name and quality of the spouse of the church, to any but the true God.†

2. The end of Christ's coming into the world. To form a church, to make a spiritual marriage between himself and the souls of men. The church was not fit for his embraces, being defiled, polluted, of a corrupt extraction; but Christ takes flesh, makes himself a sacrifice for her, pours out his own blood to wash her, and render her fit to lie in his bosom, Eph. 5:25–27. What love is this, to bring filthy man into a perpetual band of love with him! He bore our sins that defiled us, he is sensible of our afflictions that trouble us, he communicates his goods to enrich us, he took our nature that he might communicate his own, he is become one nature with us, that we might become one spirit with him. Never did loving husband do so much for his spouse as Christ for his church. How should we love, honour, serve, and adhere to so good a Saviour, and pay him that reverence and faith which is due to him!

3. Ministers are and ought to be the servants of Christ, to woo for him, to persuade men to be espoused to him, by declaring their misery without him, their happiness with him, his willingness to entertain them. They are instruments to bring them to Christ, and after they are brought, to persuade them to keep the conjugal covenant with Christ. This ought to be our highest desire, and our chiefest joy; 'This my joy is fulfilled,' saith John, since I have now attained the end of my embassy.

He then comes to make this conclusion, quite contrary to the intention of his disciples, and resolves to exercise his humility where they would have excited his pride: ver. 30, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' He must grow up in authority; the opinion that I am the Messiah must fall, that he may be owned to be the only person of God's designation. The person of Christ could not receive an increase, being infinitely great and glorious. Nor was there any diminution of the dignity of the Baptist, who lost nothing, but gained much by the appearance of our Saviour; his glory increased with his humility, and his honour of being the forerunner of Christ remained, though his office expired; but the increase and diminution was in regard of the exercise of their offices, the moon is to rule the night,

and the sun the day, and in the opinion of the people, who ran after John as the Messiah, who must learn that the honour of that office only belonged to Jesus.‡ John decreased, as the stars may be said to do when they are obscured by the sun; not that their native light is taken away from them by the presence of the sun, and they lighted up again as a candle when the sun sets; but because men need not the light and direction of the stars in the midst of the sunbeams.* Christ then increaseth in our hearts, when our knowledge of him, affection to him, and valuations of his person, rise to a taller stature in our spirits.

Observe,

1. All the glory, greatness, and righteousness of men, ought to veil to the glory and honour of Christ. We should become nothing for Christ's honour, as Christ became a worm for our benefit. The Baptist was willing to be obscured, that Christ might fill the world with a spiritual and divine glory. It is observable, that a little after this John was cast into prison by the providence of God, when his authority did clash with the authority and glory of Christ in the esteem of the people; that the Baptist's disciples, being deprived of their master, might fly to the Messiah, whose messenger their master was. It is a comfort in the afflictions of God's servants, that they make to the glory of Christ, as well as the benefit of their souls. What Herod and Herodias did, out of enmity to John, God ordered for increasing the authority and glory of the Messiah. Let us never value anything as a comfort that is a rival with our Saviour.

The reasons why he must increase he delivers from ver. 31, all which he lays down also as grounds of faith to build that conclusion on, which he makes in the text, and contains the marrow of the gospel.

1. In regard of the difference of their originals, ver. 31.
2. In regard of the manner of the communications of their doctrine, ver. 32.

3. In regard of the authority of his mission, ver. 34.
4. In regard of his excellent fitness, ver. 34, 35.
5. In regard of the special relation between the Father and the Son, and the special affection of the Father to him, ver. 35.
6. In regard of the full power given him over all things.

1. In regard of the difference of their originals: ver. 31, 'He that comes from above, is above all; he that speaks of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth.' He is from above, heavenly in his original; I am of the earth, earthy, born according to the law of Adam, by natural generation. What I speak, therefore, is mean in comparison of the declarations which shall be made by one of so illustrious a descent.† As his original is from above, so his authority is above all; but I am merely of a human descent, and have nothing in my nature but what is common to mankind. I have made no other revelations than what other men have made by the influence of God upon them; but he of whom I speak is above all, in the dignity of his person, the excellency of his office, the height and clearness of his knowledge, the purity of his graces, the extent of his authority. It is fit, therefore, that I should decrease, that he should increase. Earthly things are to give place to heavenly; his being from above notes his divine original, as the other's being of the earth notes his earthly original. It is not said, he was above, but is above all. He lost nothing of the rights of his dignity, by assuming our humanity; he was above all in reality, though a worm in appearance.

Observe,

1. The Deity of Christ is asserted, in regard of his original, 'he comes from above;' in regard of his dignity, 'he is above all;' in regard of his original, he is opposed to all men, who are from the earth in regard of generation. He was first in heaven before he was upon the earth; he could not come from above, if he were not first above. It is not therefore meant of his miraculous conception only, made by the

power of heaven,‡ and not from any earthly cause; because the flesh of Christ was never in heaven when it was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the virgin's womb; nor till after his resurrection, when he ascended in his human nature far above the heavens. Though Adam was formed immediately by the hand of God, yet it was never said that Adam descended from heaven. But he is called earthy: 1 Cor. 15:47, 'The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven.' If there had been nothing heavenly in Christ but his conception, he might be called earthy as well as Adam. Nor can it be meant only in regard of his gifts; for the gifts of John Baptist and all the prophets were from above, from the Father of lights; yet he calls himself earthy, he distinguisheth himself as he was by nature from what he was by grace. John was from heaven in regard of his office, from earth in regard of his original; but Christ was from heaven in regard of original as well as office. He comes from above, not by a change of place, for his divine nature fills all things, but in regard of manifestation, discovering his divinity, which before was manifest only in the heavens, as God is said to descend from heaven, when he manifests himself in ways either of signal mercy or justice. In regard of his dignity, he is above all, above all creatures,* and therefore God. None but God can be above all, and have the title of supremacy; as much above all angels and men, as the heaven, from whence he came, is above the earth, to which he descended, for the manifestation of himself in our flesh; it could not be said of any angel, that he was above all. If, therefore, Christ be above all, we must pay that reverence and veneration to him, that is due to his deity and infinite superiority. He that is above all must have our affections and our services above all things, according to the excellency of his person, and dignity of his office.

2. The highest saints must be sensible of original corruption. The being of the earth is not only meant by John of his human condition, but his corrupted condition, as he descended in away of ordinary generation from Adam. Behold, here is one greater than the prophets, Mat. 11:11, the immediate harbinger of the Redeemer of the world, honoured with an employment above any that went before

him, to prepare the way before the Messiah; a burning and a shining lamp, one sanctified in the womb, rejoicing at the approach of a Saviour before he saw the light; acknowledging the depravation of his nature, as he was the son of Adam, humbling himself under the consideration of it. Was there ever any elevated soul but complained of it? David, in the Old Testament, of his being 'shapen in iniquity,' Ps. 51:5; Paul, in the New, groaning under his 'body of death.' Were this more in our thoughts, pride would not be so flush in our hearts and actions.

John expresseth here his humility, by considering himself as earthly, which includes the miseries that follow an earthly extraction, viz. corruption, blindness, rebellion against God.[†] He doth not assert his baptism, and the doctrine he preached, to be earthly. They were from heaven, and our Saviour gives that testimony of him; but he pronounceth what himself and all men are in and by themselves, not what they are by the gift and grace of God.

3. Where is perfection to be found? When such a person as John, the greatest among those born of a woman, endued with such honour as to be the herald of the King of glory, confesseth himself earthy, and speaking of the earth, i.e. his words savouring and scenting of the corruption of his nature, shall men of a less stamp ever lay claim to that, which so humble and holy a person, one so characterized by Christ, could not challenge? If such a burning and shining light were not the possessor of a perfect state in this life, where is the man that is inferior to him in his other titles, that can count himself superior to him in this?

4. The gospel and word of Christ is worth credit. It is not the word of a corrupted man, hut of an heavenly offspring. Who shall we hear, if heaven can find no credit with us? Are we fit to enjoy the happiness of the place, if we will not receive the precepts of it? He is from above, he is above all, his words cannot be false while heaven is true.

Reason 2. The manner of the knowledge of Christ, or the communication of the doctrine to him: ver. 32, 'what he hath seen and heard, that he testifies.' John was inspired, but our Saviour had not only heard but seen what he testified; and in this respect he is superior to all men. The prophets saw the things upon earth, Christ hath seen them in heaven. They saw them in streams, Christ in their fountain; they saw the image of some things, but Christ hath seen the eternal models of all. He was in the bosom of the Father, and drew all that he knew from the depths of infinite wisdom. Yet, though the things he speaks are so plain and clear, few receive his testimony. So great a person, so fully understanding the mysteries of God, cannot find a reception among men; very few believed in him, like the gleanings of a vintage after the gathering of the grapes.

Observe,

1. The fitness of Christ for his prophetic office. He hath seen things in the bosom of the Father, heard things from the mouth of the Father, he hath seen them, not by revelation, but as the Son of God; was interested in the debates and results of the Trinity. He was 'by the Father when the foundations of the world were laid,' and the course of all things ordered, Prov. 8:27–30; nothing is unknown to him that is known to the Father. As he only knows him, so he only hath ability to declare him. The things which Paul saw were unutterable; he wanted ability as well as authority to declare them, 2 Cor. 12:4. Christ hath both; he hath seen and heard, and can and did testify what he saw and heard; it was his Father's mind he should do so. How worthy is God of all our praise for his wisdom in appointing, and his love in sending, a person so fully accomplished, to make known his eternal counsels concerning the pardon of sin, and conferring eternal life on the lost sons of Adam? How inexcusable doth it render the conditions of those that will not hear his voice, believe his word, since he witnesseth the things he hath seen and heard, in and from his Father!

2. From those words, no man receives his testimony, the paucity of believers is asserted; few in comparison of those that receive him not. Let not the general unbelief of men discourage us from faith. It was foretold by the Baptist; forewarned, forearmed. The devil is the god of this world; he influenceth most men; Christ is a mediator for those that are not of this world. All in the world enjoy some benefits of his mediation, but not the saving benefits of it. It is dangerous to go with a multitude. Let no man plead, such wise and learned men are of this or that opinion. If we follow the example of the most, we cannot be believers.

The Baptist makes a digression to describe the nature of faith, and the excellency of it: ver. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony,'—there is the nature of faith,—'hath set to his seal that God is true;' there is the excellency of faith.

1. The nature of faith. It is a receiving the testimony of Christ in the certainty of it, and in the extent of it. The testimony of God's promises to encourage us, of his precepts to direct us, of his threatenings to awe us, and make us adhere faster to him: a resting in this testimony as certain, as the centre of our souls, the only foundation of our hopes. God is the ultimate object of faith, Christ the immediate object of faith. Christ gives the testimony, God is the subject of that testimony. When the witness Christ gives of the things he hath seen and heard is received, to be rested in as the ground of our hope, and the rule of our walk, this is faith.

2. The excellency of faith. It owns the truth of God, 'he sets to his seal that God is true,'—a metaphor taken from contracts, to which men testify their approbation by fixing their seal. Thus we honour God, when we set to the seal of our faith to justify the truth of his word. No man that owns a God did ever absolutely doubt of his veracity; but the truth here meant is the fidelity of God in performing the promises of the gospel, in sending the Messiah. He owns God to be as good as his word, in sending a person every way complete for the office he had undertaken, to effect our redemption. God seals his

covenant to us in the blood of his Son, and by sacraments; faith is a sealing the counterpart to God. We acknowledge his truth in what he hath done, and rely upon his truth in what he hath promised yet to do; and the hearty acknowledging his veracity in what he hath already performed, is the ground of our reliance on him in what is yet to be performed. If we believe not the first, we cannot rest upon him for the latter. We cannot honour God more than by owning his truth. The glory of it is the design of the whole Scripture, from the first promise to the close of the book. He that denies the manifestation of God's truth in his Son, either opinionatively or practically, denies the authority of the whole book, makes God as bad as the devil, accounts him a greater liar than any creature, 1 John 5:10. As faith gives God the greatest honour that a creature is capable to render, so unbelief fixeth the greater disgrace upon him.

3. In regard of the authority of his mission: ver. 34, 'he whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God.' He is sent of God, which is also an encouragement to faith in him. The prophets were sent of God but as servants, Christ as a Son. He came out from God, as a beam from the sun, the prophets came from God as matter kindled by a sunbeam. He was sent by God with an immense fulness of Spirit, the prophets were sent by God with some parcels of grace. The first act of faith is to believe that God hath sent him: John 17:21, 'That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' He speaks the words of God, so did the prophets; Christ always speaks them, the prophets sometimes, as they were inspired according to the pleasure of God. Whatsoever Christ speaks, is the word and will of God. The prophets spake to the ear, Christ can speak with efficacy to the heart. He can give eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand; he speaks to the ear, and imprints upon the heart. He speaks the word of God with such an evidence and certainty of truth,* than which, if God himself should appear, there could not be greater.

4. In regard of his excellent fitness. Another motive to faith, 'for God gives not the Spirit by measure to him,' ver. 34. He hath the Spirit in the full source, the prophets in some little streams; he possesseth all

the treasures of the Spirit, the prophets some grains and lesser parcels. This was the foundation of his fitness for the discharge of his prophetic office, as he was to speak the words of God, Isa. 61:1–3. The fulness of the Spirit he had not at the first bestowed upon him, in regard of the gifts of it (though he had the fulness of it for the sanctification of his human nature), but it was communicated to him proportionably to his age and private state, whence he is said to grow in wisdom, Luke 2:52. But when he was to enter upon the discharge of his office, it was given without measure at the time of his baptism; and this inward donation of the Spirit of God to the person of Christ, was shadowed by the appearance and descent of the likeness of a dove upon him, to which the Baptist might refer in this expression.

Observe,

1. Christ hath an abundant fitness from God for the discharge of his office, and an abundant fulness for his people. God did not measure to him a certain quantity of the gifts and graces of his Spirit, but poured it upon him without stint. Besides the fitness of Christ by virtue of the hypostatical union, whereby the divinity supported the humanity in the whole work, there was a fitness by the grace of unction, when he was 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Heb. 1:9. The end of giving the Spirit in such a fulness, was to communicate to his people, that we might 'receive of his fulness,' John 1:16. It was given, not as a treasure to be preserved in a cabinet, but as a fountain to send forth fresh streams for a supply. Our Joseph hath the corn, not only for himself, but the supply of the people that come to him. And thus is Christ fitted to be an object of faith. He only is fit for this, that hath abundance of Spirit; a fitness to relieve us, a fulness to supply us; our faith were else in vain: no man would trust in a person, of whose ability, as well as sincerity, he were not assured. He is faithful in speaking the words of God, he is able in having the Spirit of God without limitation. And there is good reason it should be so, because there is a special tie between God and him, the relation of Father and Son.* He hath chosen us according to his pleasure, for the glory of his name; but he is the Son of God, and

therefore the object of his unspeakable love. Hence is the 5th and 6th Reason, viz.

5. In regard to the special relation of God to him as Father, and his affection to him, ver. 35.

6. In regard to the full power given him over all things, ver. 35.

Observe,

1. God has a special love to Christ in his office of mediatorship. He loved him from eternity, as he was his Son by eternal generation; he loves him as mediator, by special constitution; he bears this love to him as mediator, as those words are understood, John 17:24, 'For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' and the words in this verse are meant of a love to him under this consideration. The gift of all things to him, and appointing him heir of all things, is a fruit of this affection to him, as undertaking the work of redemption. God loved him in his person; he loves him in his office; he is his beloved Son, as he is sent as a prophet to be heard and obeyed, Luke 9:35. He loves him for undertaking our cause, for interposing for our peace. As he was the Son of God, he was *hæres natus*; as he is the Son of God in our nature, he is *hæres constitutus*, Heb. 1:2. He is the principal object of God's love; he loves none but in him, as he chose none but in him by his eternal decree, Eph. 1:4. Who can we then trust better than him who possesseth the love of the Father? We approve of the Father's affection to him, by bestowing our faith and love upon him. How highly do we please God, when our affections are pitched upon the same object with his, and run to the same term! If he loves the Son, he will love every one that loves him, and hate every one that contemns him. How comfortable is this love of the Father to Christ as mediator! He loves all for whom Christ doth exercise this office, all that believe in him; and his love is as unchangeable to the one as the other. Our security is founded upon the love of God to the Son, which is immutable, and consequently to all that are embraced in that office by him. God will not repent of

what he confers upon us, because he gives it for the love he bears his Son, which love redounds to his seed. As that love will never fail, so his grace and favour to a believer will never fail.

2. Christ is entrusted with all things necessary to our salvation. Some, therefore, interpret it, he hath given all things to man through his hand; he hath the possession, but for the believer's use. God hath given all things into his hand, all creatures to rule them, all treasures to bestow them, all power to protect his people; he hath given him the world of men and angels to govern, the world of his elect to redeem; he hath put all things under his feet, and 'made him the head over all things for the church,' Eph. 1:22. The consequence of the Baptist in the next verse, of believers having eternal life, would not be valid if he had this power only for himself, and not for their use. How comfortable is this! Things were given into the hands of Adam for his use and his posterity's; but he lost them, undid himself, and drew with him all that were in his loins. They are now given into the hands of Christ for our use, who cannot lose them; and therefore we cannot be lost if we believe in him. It is our happiness they are in his hands, and not in our own; in the hands of one who cannot lose them by sin, as Adam did, because of the permanent holiness of his nature, having the sanctifying graces of the Spirit without measure; nor by the craft and power of the devil, because of his infinite superiority above him, and having the enabling gifts of the Spirit without measure. His humanity was opposed, but not conquered; he hath an holiness infinitely distant from sin, and a wisdom to defeat the subtlety of the serpent.

We know also where to go for the alms we want. Christ is God's almoner to us, and our advocate to God; a mediator between God and us; he hath a commission to ask, and a promise to receive, Ps. 2:8. We may be sure to receive if we believe. The unchangeable God will stand to whatsoever the Son doth; he will not diminish his love to his Son, nor deny his own grant to him. The gift given is without repentance in the Father, and the management of the trust without deceit in the Son. We have not what we want, because we go not to

the officer God hath appointed for distribution; a treasure is deposited in his hand, but for want of faith we want the comfort. We dishonour the wisdom of God's choice, as well as the pleasure of his will, and deny the authority our Saviour is invested with, by neglecting him, and not believing in him. Oh wonderful goodness! to put our concerns into the sure hand of his Son, which were lost by the weak hands of Adam.

Upon all this discourse, John Baptist founds this conclusion, ver. 36. 'He that believes in the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believes not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Though all power be given to Christ, and he hath authority to dispense the treasures of God, whereof everlasting life is the chief, yet none can expect to enjoy it but upon the condition of believing on him. It is very reasonable that whosoever expects the blessing he is entrusted with, should assent and consent to God's choice of him and the conditions of enjoying them.

The text is made up of a motive to faith, and a dissuasive from unbelief.

1. The motive is drawn from the reward, everlasting life; spiritual life de facto, eternal life de jure; one in hand, and the other in hope, Rom. 8:24.

2. The dissuasive from the misery, which is double.

1. Exclusion from life; shall not see or enjoy life, or shall not have so much as the least sense of it.

2. Permanency of wrath; the wrath of God abides on him.

Thus, after the description of Christ's person, dignity, and power, the Baptist directs his disciples, who at first made the complaint of our Saviour, to a belief in him, by the most forcible arguments. He being so great as I have described, can give eternal life to his followers; and being so dear to God as he is, the wrath of his Father will remain

upon his rejecters; and therefore, if the happiness of eternal life be desirable, and the terrors of divine wrath formidable, be sure that you receive his testimony, that you may acquire the one and escape the other.

He notes the special and immediate object of faith in both his conclusions: believes on the Son, and believes not the Son. Christ, as the Son of God, and sent by God, is the object of our faith.

The word translated believes not, is ἀπειθῶν, which some render, he that obeys not; the word properly signifies disobedient and obstinate, but in the Scripture it is often rendered as it is in the text, unbelieving, which is not without precedent in heathen authors.* It may well be rendered 'he that believes not,' because it is opposed to believing in the first part of the verse, and may be meant of final unbelief, where there is not a simple ἀπιστία, but an obstinacy and unpersuadableness against the gospel. It is not said, the wrath of God shall come upon him, but abides upon him. Either,

1. To shew man's misery by nature. Every man is born in a state of wrath, and remains under wrath, unless some expiation be made for his sin. Now, since there is no relief against this state but by the blood of the Son of God, which was shed for propitiation; if this be refused or neglected, the soul lies under that curse original corruption placed him in, and which he hath since frequently merited by an addition of many actual sins. The debt due to the law must be paid, either by believing in him who hath paid it, or by suffering it in our own persons; it is faith only makes us pass from that death our natural state hath subjected us to, unto that life which God hath provided in and by his Son: John 5:24, 'He that believes is passed from death to life.'

2. Or to distinguish it from the momentaneous wrath which sometimes lights upon a believer, which is called 'a little wrath,' Isa. 54:8. There is a wrath which breathes upon a man like fire, which doth not destroy but refine; but this is a permanent wrath, which

punisheth and preserveth the subject for ever under it. It is a wrath that will not pass away, whereby the eternity of punishment is at least implied; it shall never depart from him. In other expressions of God's anger, there may be a mixture of tastes of comforts; but here wrath encompasseth, and overflows like a sea of gall, without a taste of joy, or a touch of blessedness.

The doctrine I shall insist on is this: continued and final unbelief renders a man infallibly an object of the eternal wrath of God. The communication of the life of God was broken off by the sin of man, to which we are restored only by faith in the Redeemer; and without faith we are at a distance from God, the fountain of life, and remain under that wrath the state of nature put us into. As faith unites us to God, so unbelief separates us from God. Whatsoever righteousness there is in a man without faith in Christ, is vain and perishing; it is as stubble, or a paper wall, which cannot defend any man from the flaming sword of God's justice. It is of no efficacy of itself to eternal life; it may render the wrath and punishment less sharp than another's, but cannot remove it, and put a man into a state of life. It is not all kind of unbelief, or dissent from some particular truth, that subjects a man to eternal wrath; but unbelief that despiseth the Son of God, that refuseth to receive his testimony. It is by this men perish under the gospel, and not for want of declarations of divine goodness, or want of provision in Christ. Those that refused the invitation to the supper, so incensed the king, that he pronounceth an irrevocable sentence against every man of them, that they should not taste of the dainties he had provided, Luke 14:24. And our Saviour, in the direction to his apostles for preaching the gospel, orders them this theme: Mark 16:16, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned,' as the immutable decree of God, concerning the state and condition of mankind, as to life or death. The latter follows upon the former; for if he that believes shall be saved, then the contrary to salvation will fall upon the unbeliever; and not only a bare privation of salvation and exclusion from the blessed vision of God, but a sharper sentence of

misery, according to his ingratitude, in refusing the riches of divine grace, offered to him in the gospel.

I shall premise two things.

1. Unbelief is not the only sin that damns. Other sins will condemn as well as that. Adam's first disobedience was the ground of Adam's condemnation. Man was condemned by the law, before Christ was promised in the gospel. The world had come short of the glory of God, before Christ took the infirmities of our nature for suffering. He came to save, which supposeth man in a state of damnation; he came to redeem, which supposeth man in a state of captivity; he came to bring us to God, which supposeth our distance from God; he was incarnate to free us from the law, which supposeth our being under the curse of it.

2. Yet it is that sin, without which no other sin would damn a man that hath heard the gospel. If a man be found guilty of felony, for which the law allows him the mercy of the book, if he can read, he prevents the sentence of death; if he cannot, he sinks under the penalty of the law: his felony, and not his ignorance, is the meritorious cause of his execution. The case is much the same; men are condemned for other sins, which misery would have been prevented by faith; yet it differs in this, that unbelief is our sin; it is our duty to believe, since God hath authority to reveal his truth, and command us to acknowledge it; but the prisoner's not reading is his misery, not his crime. The sickness a man lies under would not have killed him* if he had taken the physic offered him; though the disease were mortal in itself, it might have been expelled by that sovereign remedy. The refusal of the medicine may be counted the formal or moral cause of his death, though the disease be the procuring or natural cause of it. A malefactor is cast into prison for treason; a pardon is offered and refused; had it been accepted, he had not undergone the penalty due to his crime. No sin could destroy us, if unbelief did not reign in us. Faith would instrumentally remove the guilt of all other sin. Upon the embracing the expiatory sacrifice

of the gospel, our other debts would be cancelled; upon a refusal, our guilt stands upon record, and charged upon us in full vigour, and receives a greater aggravation, by the rejecting the most obliging revelation of God, and counting the remedy for sin in the merit and satisfaction of Christ a trifle. Other sins condemn meritoriously, and this formally, say some. Though all graces are in a believer, yet his salvation is principally ascribed to faith in the rank of grace: Eph. 2:8, 'By grace you are saved, through faith.' So, though a man be guilty of all sins, yet his condemnation is attributed to his unbelief. The guilt of the most monstrous enormities would not be laid to any man's charge, if he did by faith and repentance turn to God; and the most glittering righteousness, with unbelief, will not prevent his being fuel for wrath. Who are excluded from the bosom of Abraham? The sons of the kingdom, bred up and nourished among the ordinances of God, but neglecting or refusing a Saviour. And who are entertained there? Gentiles besmeared with the mire of idolatry, yet expiated by the mediator they believed in, Mat. 8:11, 12; it is upon the occasion of the faith of the centurion, that Christ speaks of the happiness of the Gentiles and misery of the Jews. Men, strangers to God for so many ages, are engrafted by faith, and prepared for heaven, while those entrusted with the oracles of God are disinherited by unbelief, and made vessels of wrath. In regard of merit, every sin is the cause of condemnation; in regard of execution, unbelief is the sole cause. Shimei reviles David,* is pardoned by him, and his pardon renewed by Solomon, but with a condition that he should not go out of Jerusalem; he breaks this condition, is, according to Solomon's word, executed. The true cause of his death, is his reviling of David; had he not been guilty of that, Solomon had no ground of offence, nor had imposed any condition upon him. But when he violates that condition, and goes out of Jerusalem, against the command of the king, Solomon takes occasion to punish him for his former crime. Shimei might have avoided the punishment, by observing the condition commanded. Men are condemned by the law, and executed by the justice of it; the condemnation of the law would not take place, if faith, the cure of guilt, had possession of the heart. No sin can condemn, if faith be present; and no righteousness

can save, if faith be absent. While unbelief remains, all sins are retained; when this is removed, all sins are remitted. All that perish, perish either by or for this not believing; those to whom the gospel is not revealed, perish by reason of their not believing, through ignorance; it is by reason of that the wrath of God abides on them; and when there is but one medicine to cure a disease, the ignorant patient perisheth for want of the knowledge of it; the knowing patient perisheth for want of applying it. This the schools understand,[†] when they say, the heathens that never heard of Christ perish *ratione infidelitatis*; those, that hear of him perish *propter infidelitatem*, in a state of infidelity, though not for it.

For the evidence of this doctrine, let us consider some propositions.

1. All men by nature are under condemnation. The insensibleness of this, is the cause of unbelief; and without a due consideration of this, there can be no entertainment of the gospel. Christ himself preacheth this doctrine: John 3:18, 'He that believes on me is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He is condemned already, not shall be, but is, i.e. he is in a state of condemnation. The sentence is pronounced by the justice of God against every son of Adam. 'Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,' and 'judgment came upon all men to condemnation,' Rom. 5:12, 18. All the branches of Adam were adjudged to eternal death by that law, which he, by his original apostasy, transgressed, and they, by their repeated offences, have further violated. All are the children of wrath, all are become guilty before God: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. 3:10. The whole race of mankind was bound up in that sentence pronounced against Adam upon transgressing the law, which God had enacted: Gen. 2:17. 'Thou shalt die the death.' By the same act of justice which cast Adam out of paradise were all his posterity expelled. We are an accursed generation by the covenant of works; our hands and our heels are lifted up against our sovereign Lord; we are utterly naked of original righteousness; all the

sins we have committed have every one damnation at the heel. We are exposed to the curses of the law, the fury of God, the scoffs of the tempting serpent; there is but an inch between us and devouring flames; all are condemned, though all are not yet executed; God yet gives respite to man to lay hold upon his mercy in the gospel. If a man die without faith in the Son of God, he is as surely undone as if he were under the full execution of all the threatenings of the law at this instant. He is 'condemned already,' i.e. he hath the cause of condemnation in himself, the sharp points of the law are full against him; as a malefactor in the gaol for some capital crime may be said to be condemned already, in the nature of the offence he hath committed, by the equity of that law he hath violated. There is a double condemnation, one by the law, another by the gospel. All men are in nature condemned by the first, all unbelievers by both; they are condemned at the tribunal of the law for transgressing it, and even at the mercy-seat of the gospel for rejecting it. None are exempted from it but by faith in the gospel, which is the only way to escape the severity of the law. When a man appeals from the tribunal of the law, whereby he stands condemned, to the throne of grace, wherein mercy sways the sceptre dipped in the blood of Christ, casting himself upon the merit of that blood, and resolving to obey the voice of a Redeemer, he comes forth from his prison, and the darkness of condemnation, into the light of life. He is condemned already. Every elect person is thus in a state of condemnation, while he remains in a state of unbelief; for if there be 'no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. 8:1, then there is nothing but condemnation to them that are yet out of Christ; and if a man depart out of the world in that state, he for ever lies under the irrevocable sentence of the law, for ever cursed, because for ever guilty. And the reason is rendered, 'because he believes not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He refuseth the only remedy God hath provided, and excludes himself from the life, salvation, righteousness, and happiness which Christ hath purchased, and therefore lies under the judgment of the old sentence by refusing the grace of the new administration, and acquires a new guilt; for the more excellent the person that is neglected, the only Son of God, the

greater punishment is deserved. He further describes to us* that faith which brings us out of that natural condemnation; he doth not say, because he hath not believed that the only Son of God is come into the world, which is a faith that many rest upon,—this would exclude only absolute infidelity and dissent from the doctrine of the gospel,—but 'because he believes not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He receives not his word, relies not upon his office, submits not to his authority, for name signifies this and much more in Scripture. A man may believe the Son of God is come, yet place no confidence in him, nor pay any obedience to him. A man may believe such a man to be a physician, and able to cure, but if he useth not his medicine he shall be never the better for his skill.

2. Man being thus naturally condemned, his unbelief binds all his guilt upon him: John 8:24, 'I say therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins.' In the illative, therefore, he notes their natural condemnation, because they were 'of this world,' ver. 23. And there is no remedy to prevent this death, but to 'believe that I am he,' the Messiah, the person appointed to bruise the serpent's head, appointed to be the Saviour of the world. All sins are 'sealed up in a bag,' Job 14:17, recorded with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, Jer. 17:1. Every indictment remains in force; nothing but faith in the blood of Christ can cancel the writing, deface the seal, take the accusation off the file. Unbelief therefore locks all other sins like shackles upon the conscience,* which otherwise by the help of Christ might easily shake them off; all men's violations of the law stick to them, and the wrath due to them hangs over them. When a prince pardons all misdemeanours by his proclamation upon easy conditions, and swears that if there be not an acceptance of it the refuser shall answer the law for all his guilt; if a man will not sue out his pardon, will not perform so easy a condition, he continues the weight of all his former guilt upon him. The first promise was made after the fall, to take away the guilt of transgressions against the first covenant, Heb. 9:15. If the promise be not received, the mediator applied, the guilt of those transgressions endures. We are

condemned upon the breach of the first covenant, and can only be restored to a state of life by embracing the new. Sin remains in its vigour, as a disease upon a patient, by refusing the only physician able to cure it. It fastens guilt the more, because it is an approbation of all the iniquities committed against the law; and increaseth the guilt of those sins he was guilty of before, because he manifests a greater fondness of them, a stronger unwillingness to part with them. It leaves the unbeliever naked to the stroke of divine justice, without a refuge to cover him. He that refuseth shelter against a potent adversary exposeth himself to his fury. There is no pleading the covenant of works; that hath been transgressed, and proclaims only punishment, not pardon; nor the covenant of grace, the sanctuary of that he refused to enter into. So that he is not only, as a heathen, in the same condition as if Christ had never suffered, in regard of want of relief, but in a worse, in regard of sharpness of punishment; he hath not only no more title to happiness than if Christ had never died, but a stronger title to punishment because Christ did die. His sin remains in more vigour against him, because the only remedy is refused by him. The weight of guilt is not removed, and the hour of punishment is reserved for such an one.

3. The covenant of grace, in the hand of a mediator, is the last covenant that God will make. The times of the gospel are called 'the last times,' 'the last days,' Isa. 2:2, Heb. 1:2; no other relieving administration is intended by God, or can be expected by us; this contains the whole and utmost counsel of God about the salvation of men, Acts 20:27. An anathema is poured out against any that 'preach another gospel,' Gal. 1:9; 'No more sacrifice remains for sin,' Heb. 10:26, 27. There is but one sacrifice for expiation, but one mediator for intercession, but one special officer appointed by God under whose wing we can be safe. It is a covenant of infinite grace; there can be none above it, because there cannot be grace above infinite. There can be no refuge but in mercy; if mercy refuse, what can step in for our relief? Mercy is the only bar to justice; if the bar be removed, what stop to the overflowing surge? This covenant is settled, that no man shall enjoy the benefit of the satisfaction the

surety hath made, without the conditions of repentance and faith. If this law stand of force, it cannot be supposed that there can be any salvation without a satisfaction for the breach of this covenant, as well as a satisfaction was necessary for the breach of the first; for the honour of God will as much or more require a satisfaction for the breach of this, as being a greater contempt of him, than for the breach of the first covenant, wherein the contempt of him was less, and so many attributes were not disparaged by it. This satisfaction must be by a stronger surety than ourselves; for ourselves we are as unable to return a recompence for the violations of the second covenant, as we were to do it for the first. So strong a surety we cannot have, unless the Son of God should be sent to suffer again, only upon this condition, that the sinner should be discharged without anything done on his part. But as to the first, the sufferings of the Son of God must never be repeated; he was to bear sin but once, his second appearance is to be 'without sin unto salvation,' Heb. 9:28, the salvation of believers, the damnation of unbelievers. No more sacrifice remains for any sin in the world. Nor, suppose Christ were sent to bear sin, and be again the chastisement of our peace after the violations of the second covenant, it cannot be upon such terms, that upon the account of his sufferings, without anything done on our parts, we should be discharged. It seems not congruous to the honour of God to send his Son to suffer again, or if he did, to impose no conditions upon those that should enjoy the benefit of those sufferings. There can be no less required than is now, which is no more than the receiving the atonement, Rom. 5:11, a consent to it, and acceptance of it. Nor is it consistent with the holiness of God to discharge men upon the suffering of a surety, who will persist in that sin for which the surety suffered, and make use of a Saviour to be free from suffering but not free from offending. No more is required now; in this consists faith and repentance; and no less can reasonably be thought to be required if Christ should again be exposed to suffering. What less can any prince, any man require, for any favour he doth, but acceptance and gratitude? So that though the transgression against the covenant of works is relieved by the covenant of grace, yet the transgressions against this can have no

relief but in it. For it is the last, and if it were not, you cannot suppose any covenant to succeed upon lighter terms than the grace is offered in this. To suppose a covenant without conditions, is as much as to suppose man to be created without a rule of obedience; and this is to suppose God without an exercise of his sovereignty, and a creature without subjection, both which are impossible.

4. It is impossible, according to the economy of the gospel, that an unbeliever can be saved by mercy. A man must either be saved by justice or mercy: by justice he might in the first covenant, had he not provoked it; by mercy in the second covenant he may, if he doth not refuse it. Now, justice cannot save him in the first covenant, because he wants a righteousness of his own; mercy cannot in the second, because he will not accept the conditions of it, which is, the receiving the righteousness of another. Other sins offend justice, but this provokes mercy, which is the severest attribute when provoked, as the sweetest when received. It is not fit, indeed, that mercy should save an impenitent, unbelieving sinner, God having appointed a mediator, for the content of his mercy, as well as the satisfaction of his justice (that mercy might not complain for the severe destruction of mankind), and mercy fully acquiescing in the reasonableness of the conditions of faith and repentance proposed in the gospel. Justice and mercy having met together upon those articles, and struck hands in a full agreement, it is not fit mercy should entertain an unbelieving sinner, who refuseth the terms infinite mercy hath been satisfied with in the compact between itself and justice. If mercy should offer to embrace such a one, it would not be true to its own condition; as, if justice should not punish the transgressions of the law, it would not be true to the law, and consequently not true to itself, because it is the rule of the law. Mercy to such a one after this agreement would be an unequitable mercy. We must not fancy a weak and dishonourable mercy—a God unrighteous in his acts of compassion. Mercy cannot but be offended to see the conditions it gained in its suit, and which it was fully contented with, despised and trod underfoot. Mercy can no more save any that remains an object of revenging justice under the first covenant, than justice can

condemn one that is an object of mercy by receiving the blood of the second. The attributes of God cannot invade one another's rights. It is fit he should be left to the hands of justice, that will not stand to the terms and covenant mercy made for him.

(1.) This is not consistent with the truth of God. When God made the law, he annexed promises and threatenings, and his truth was bound to make them good upon the suitable behaviour of man; though we find only a threatening upon record, yet that implies a promise, Gen. 2:17. If death be threatened upon transgression, life is implied upon obedience. But when man broke the law, truth was engaged on the side of justice, and had nothing to do in a legal way with mercy; for man, by his sin, had rendered himself fuel for justice, and had entailed upon himself the horror of the threatening. But in the work of redemption, mercy and truth, which sin had separated in regard of any joint acts towards man (asking truth to be a second to the justice of God), met together, Ps. 85:10. These attributes, which were severed, were joined again in an indissoluble knot—mercy to the sinner, and truth to the threatening. Mercy took man's part, and desired peace; justice took the law's part, and required punishment: neither mercy nor justice could lose their nature; sin had severed them, Christ re-unites them, and truth now is engaged on both sides. If an unbeliever, therefore, in that state thinks to be saved, mercy and truth must be severed; but this happy union cannot be dissolved for the sake of rebels against both. As the power of God, though infinite, is regulated by his will,* so the mercy of God, though infinite, is regulated by his truth: he hath made faith an unalterable condition of the covenant; and God cannot deny his covenant, because he cannot deny himself. The truth of God is engaged to damn such a man more than before; it is as well engaged to make good the evangelical threatening, as it was before to make good the legal. Justice will condemn both by law and gospel; it is reason that justice should satisfy itself upon that man, as far as he is able to give satisfaction, who will not be contented with that which infinite justice was satisfied with. Mercy will condemn him; that hath no reason to afford any relief to that man that despiseth the evangelical

conditions, which fully pleased it, and re-united it with justice and truth. God hath confirmed those terms by an oath, that those that believe not 'shall not enter into his rest,' Heb. 3:18. But he never took an oath that he that observed not the covenant of works[†] should not enter into his rest. Though Adam was under a covenant of works in his innocent state, yet he was not in such a state as to be under an utter impossibility of salvation upon the transgression of it, because God had provided a remedy in his Son. But he is now under an oath to punish every man that doth finally reject that remedy. The highest truth cannot deny one tittle of his word and oath.

(2.) Nor is it consistent with his wisdom. It is not agreeable to the wisdom of a prince to be reconciled to any rebels that will not suffer themselves to be reduced to their former obedience.

If God should change his dispensation, it must be because the terms are too hard, or the benefits not valuable enough. Neither of those can be; the conditions are most reasonable, the benefit the most precious, that God, in the conjecture of any creature, can give. It had been no act of wisdom to send his Son to satisfy his justice, if mercy should be so cheaply prostituted; if rebels could enjoy the favour while they cherished their rebellions; if the purchase should be given to those that dishonoured the purchaser, and salvation conferred upon those that contemned the Saviour. The wisdom of God would suffer, in undervaluing the meritorious blood of his Son, if he conferred the same favour upon those that despise it and those that esteem it, and placed swine, that trample his jewels in the dirt, in the same happy condition with those that lodge them in their dearest affections. What ground of praise for that manifold wisdom, so much celebrated in Scripture, in the mission of Christ, if any could be admitted into heaven without faith in him and love to him? God would declare his death to be rather an act of cruelty to him than kindness to us, since, if any were saved without faith in him, it would be evident that his death was unnecessary, since we could be as happy without him as by him.

(3.) Nor is it consistent with the honour of Christ. The very end of Christ's death is crossed by unbelief. He suffered the punishment due to our sins, that sin might not reign in us, as well as that the punishment might not reign over us. What benefit can we reasonably expect by his death, if we will not believe in him and renounce our sin, which is contrary to the end of his death? God would act contrary to the end of our Saviour's death, in giving to the goats the benefits his Son purchased for the sheep, John 10:15; and bestowing upon his enemies what he designed for his friends, John 15:13; and sprinkling that blood upon those that tread it under foot, which was shed for the gathering together the sons of God, John 11:52; and imputing the merits of it to impure wretches, that was intended for the purifying a peculiar people unto himself, Tit. 2:14. When Christ died only for believers, in regard of the actual communication and application, it is a disparagement unto him, and a making his death in vain, to let the despisers of it have an equal share in the benefits of it, and make it as much a savour of life to them that will not value it as to those that do. What king, that offers reconciliation to rebels, by the intercession of his son, demanding the conditions of trust in his son and obedience to him, promising them not only upon it the pardon of their crimes, but the investing them with new favours, would not dishonour his son, as well as himself, if he admitted any one person of that rebellious pack without that trust and obedience to him upon which the pardon was offered. Let us, then, appeal to our own consciences, and ask them the question, whether they think it comely and worthy of God to save any against his word, his oath, his threatenings, the intention of the death of Christ, against all those terms upon which he is proffered to man?

(4.) Justice cannot but punish an unbeliever. As goodness cannot but smile upon an innocent creature, mercy cannot but hold open its arms for a believing penitent, so justice cannot but flame out against an obstinate rebel. As goodness would not be goodness if it rejected an holy soul, mercy would contradict its own nature if it thrust back a penitent believer, the proper object of it, so justice would be injustice if it spared a final unbeliever. And, as the first, viz., to act contrary to

his goodness, it is impossible in the nature of God; the second, viz., to act against his mercy, is impossible in the settled method of God; so the third, to act against his justice, is impossible in the nature of God, say some, with much probability; but certainly impossible according to the revealed will of God. As the holiness of God cannot but hate sin, so the justice of God cannot but punish it: it would be some degree of love to impurity wholly to spare it. That God spares a sinner for a time, is for the manifestation of his patience, but especially upon the account of the mediation of Christ; for, as by him the world was created, so, after sin, by his mediation it did consist; without this the world could not have stood under the curses of the law. But to spare an obstinate rebel for ever, would evidence an approbation of his sin, as well as an affection to his person. God, therefore, having manifested that he will have sin punished, in the sinner, or the surety, and that he will not pardon it without satisfaction, the punishment of an unbelieving rebel will be as unavoidable, as the punishment of Christ after he had entered himself as our surety. Since God did not spare the Son that he loved, when he would stand in the stead of sinners, can he spare the unbeliever that he hates, when he slights the Son that he infinitely loves, and thereby dares the justice of God, which he hath seen lie so heavy upon the Son of his affection? could any dispensation from suffering have been granted, his only Son, a spotless surety, should have enjoyed the benefit of it; but that could not be, in regard of his immutable justice, after he was accepted by him in that quality. Since it was necessary his only beloved Son should be exposed to sufferings for the remission of the sins of others, it is as necessary the final unbeliever should be exposed to dreadful punishments for his own transgressions, and the slighting so great a remedy. The justice of God is inflexible in the punishment of sin.* when the sinner remains obstinate and impenitent: the inflexibility is declared in the sufferings of Christ, which were necessary for remission. And though his sufferings, and the satisfaction thereby, were of infinite value, yet they are wholly useless for the eternal benefit of those that wrap up themselves in their infidelity and impenitence; faith and repentance being required as necessary conditions for the enjoyment of the fruit

of these sufferings. When this mediation and satisfaction of Christ is wholly refused, or not embraced upon the terms on which it is offered, the only bar to the inundation of God's justice is taken away, whereby the soul lies naked to the overflowings of it.

(5.) That person which was the offered Saviour, shall be the judge and condemner of such as neglect the terms of salvation by him. What sanctuary can an unbeliever have, when the mediator of mercy appears as the inflicter of punishment? 'He appears the second time to the salvation only of those that look for him,' Heb. 9:28[†] (that affectionately look for his appearance), of those whose sins he bore upon the tree. Christ did never obtain any peace and pardon for those that persevere to the end in their infidelity. Such Christ is said not to know: Mat. 7:28, 'I never knew you;' not to pray for: John 17:9, 'I pray not for the world,' i.e. for such as remain in their sin, and are separated from God by their unbelief. God hath promised to make all his enemies his footstool; and as he hath conferred upon him a power of asking for his people, so he hath given him a power of destroying his enemies, and committed all judgment to the Son: Ps. 2:8, 9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,' is the fruit of Christ's asking of God. As he gives him blessings for those that trust in him, ver. 12, so he gives him judgments for those that set themselves against him. God's mercy will not relieve any that are mortally wounded by his Son; and be that gives Christ the whole world upon asking, will not contradict him in his severest acts of dashing his enemies like a potter's vessel. As he had a love to shed his blood, so he hath a wrath to burn them that kiss him not with a kiss of homage. They are so far from having any share in his intercessions for mercy, that they have a dreadful interest in his pleas for wrath. He indeed prayed upon the cross for the forgiveness of some, he prays also for indignation to be poured out upon others, Ps. 69:23, 24. It is the cry of him to whom they gave gall for meat, and in his thirst, vinegar to drink, ver. 21. His blood hath a voice for the forgiveness of some, and for the punishment of others; it hath as loud a cry against them that undervalue it as it hath for them that do apply it. He cannot intercede for any but upon the account of his

blood; his intercession is no other than the voice of his blood which speaks in heaven. His blood will no more speak for them that slight it, than Abel's blood did for Cain that shed it 'It speaks better things than the blood of Abel,' but only for those that are 'come to the Mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling,' Heb. 12:24; nay, Christ is not able to save any but those that believe. 'He is able to save,' but with a restriction, 'those that come to God by him,' Heb. 7:24, 25. Not able morally, as it is said, 'it is impossible to renew' apostates from the gospel 'to repentance,' Heb. 6:4, 6. Not but that God can by his absolute power renew one that doth totally apostatise from the profession of the gospel, but in regard of his wisdom and righteousness it is impossible. So Christ is able to save none but those that come onto God by him. God hath put such a limitation in the covenant, agreed between himself and our Saviour; those only are to be justified that have the 'knowledge of his righteous servant,' Isa. 53:11. He saves only his seed, those that are 'begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.' He can save only those that are his members, and faith only gives us an union to Christ, and so entitles us to salvation. Christ can never run counter to his gospel, and bless them whom the gospel curseth, or save them whom the gospel condemns. This would be a contradiction, to confirm the covenant by his death, and break it by his life; to walk according to the counsel of God when he was in the flesh, and defeat it when he is upon his throne. He that gave mercies according to men's faith when he was upon earth, will not give salvation to unbelief since he is ascended into heaven. His usual language was, 'Be it unto you according to your faith,' 'Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee.'

(6.) That which makes the sin against the Holy Ghost unpardonable in this world, makes final unbelief unpardonable in the other. A denial of Christ is joined with the sin against the Holy Ghost, Luke 12:9, 10. Not that unbelief, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, are the same; for the one is pardonable in this life, and the other not. The sin against the Holy Ghost is, I suppose, accounting Christ an impostor, or a total apostasy from the doctrine of the gospel, after

some approbations of it, and tastes of its sweetness in the understanding, Heb. 6:4–6. But the final unbelief of those that sit under the doctrine of the gospel, puts them in the same state with the other: Mark 3:28–30, 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.' 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,' Mat. 12:31, i.e. may be pardoned;* there is nothing in the economy of God to hinder it. The transgression against the law was a transgression properly against the Father, to whom the creation is ascribed, and who settled the law upon that occasion. Nothing in the wisdom of God repugns, but that the pardon of this kind of sin may be presented to men, and a Redeemer may be appointed to make a satisfaction to the Father for it, and the benefit of it may be enjoyed by men, upon their turning to God from whom they had revolted (and upon less conditions than this, no benefit could reasonably be expected by it, as was shewn before). As creation is ascribed to the Father, and consequently the law, so redemption is appropriated to the Son, and consequently the gospel. By his sufferings he paid the price, and by his resurrection he received the discharge, and an approbation of his sufferings, and of the conditions upon which the fruit of them was to be received by men. Unbelief is a sin properly and immediately against the Son; as Christ is the immediate object of faith, so he is the immediate object of unbelief. The sin against the Father is clearly more pardonable, according to this dispensation, than the sin against the Son; because here is a satisfaction made to the Father for the sins against the law. But though it he made and offered to men, yet they may give no respect to it, and by reason of the natural darkness of their minds not understand the high concern of it. But when the Spirit doth by a common work enlighten their minds, and make them in some measure see the comeliness, excellency, and necessity of the things the Redeemer hath done and suffered; if after this they prefer their trifling pleasures before him, and will finally deny him in opinion, profession, or practice, what help can be expected? The justice of God required satisfaction by blood for the breach of the law, because the law was, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death.'

The Son therefore relieves men by his death for transgressions committed against the Father. The law of Christ requires belief in the satisfaction he hath wrought: faith is called therefore 'faith in his blood,' Rom. 3:25. The Spirit presseth men to accept of this satisfaction made by the Son, doth accompany the ministry of the word, gives some touches to men, instils some motions into them, and this frequently; for the law of Christ is not as the law at the creation was, the very day wherein thou neglectest or refusest to accept of this satisfaction, thou shalt die the death. The patience of God concurs with the offers made by Christ, and gives time of respite; and the Spirit falls in to inform men of their undone condition, and persuade them to comply with the design of God. If then the new order of the Father, the satisfaction of Christ, the persuasion of the Spirit in the word, are all set at nought, what help can be looked for? There is not a fourth person to step in with any operations. The whole Trinity, and their personal operations, are particularly offered and slighted, the mercy of the Father, the satisfaction of the Son, and the importunity of the Spirit; since therefore there is no other God, no other Father, no other Son, no other Spirit superior to those, no other world under the government of another God, that any man can transport himself into (as a man may do upon the earth, pass into one country, when he hath offended the laws of another), where is there any relief? It must be in acting those methods over again, exposing his Son again to suffering, and that doth not consist with the wisdom and majesty of God. But suppose he should do so, there is as little hopes that a man will accept of it then as now, considering the natural enmity against God. And upon the same account that he should die a second time, there would be no end put to the reiteration of his sufferings. Besides (as was said before) the conditions cannot be more favourable; for God hath condescended to the lowest terms that you can suppose not only an infinite majesty, but a prince, nay, an inferior person can condescend unto, in the case of the revolt of a subject or servant. But the Scripture concludes the contrary, and therefore there must be a new scripture, a new declaration of God to give you intelligence of any design of God to reverse the sentence of this. When the law was

broke, he made but one promise of the seed of the woman, and all the other promises in the word are but streams flowing, and channels cut, from this fountain; upon the breach of that law the Redeemer stood between consuming vengeance and the law-offending creature, and God was willing to repair the breach of the first law by the grace of a second, and sent his Son to close the gap, and reunite him and his creature. But where is there any provision made for the retrieving the final contempt of this? No revelation of God ever acquainted us with one counsel, or thought of God about it; it is denied by the mouth of our Saviour. If there were any other remedy, the wrath due to the contempt of this would not abide; but because it abides, therefore there is no remedy.

To conclude this and the rest, a man can expect no relief from any attribute of God. A man must have a bar put to it, either by justice or mercy: by justice he cannot, because he despiseth that wherewith justice was satisfied, and puts from him that screen God placed between the flames of his wrath and the fuel of a sinner; by mercy he cannot, for he hath sinned against the highest pitch of it, and refused the terms wherewith mercy is contented. The wisdom of God cannot relieve him, for he hath rejected that which was the birth of an higher wisdom than ever was discovered in the creation. His wisdom is as much bound to keep up the honour of his justice and truth, as the honour of his mercy. Shall he have it from patience? Patience and longsuffering are not, in the very notion of them, eternal, but temporary. Shall he fly to goodness? Justice is a part of God's goodness, for he were not good if he were not righteous. The truth of God to such is a very comfortless attribute, that turns the edge of all the threatenings against him, who hath despised his veracity in his promise. Is there any more hopes in the power of God? It is that people frequently talk of, God is sufficient and able. It is true, he is able to do more than any creature can conceive. But though God hath a natural power, he hath not, we say, a moral power after his word is past; he would not be just if he used his power against his truth; as we would not count a man just who would do that by strength which he could not do with honesty. The great reason of men's security is

their singling out one attribute of God, without considering the concurrence and combination of the rest.

(7.) The law strengthens the sentence of the gospel against an unbeliever. The moral law condemns every man that doth not believe what God reveals.* We are to have no other gods before him, nor set up any graven image, nor fancy any [other] way and means of salvation than what God hath ordained. The gospel reveals the object of faith, the law then steps in and enjoins an entertainment of it, because it is the revelation of God. Christ tells the Jews that Moses accused them: John 5:45, 'Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust;' i.e. there is no need for me to charge you before God, you have one whom you think is your defender, will be your accuser for not believing in me. Moses, i.e. the law of Moses, meant properly of the ceremonies prefiguring him, and the prophecies in the books of Moses predicting him. But the law, taken singly for the law of nature, enjoins to believe whatsoever God discovers; and the condemnation of men for unbelief will be by the law of nature, not as singly considered in itself, because it can so condemn only for the neglect of what it discovers; it doth not discover Christ the object of faith, and therefore of itself cannot condemn for the neglect of Christ; it judgeth men only for the violation of the immediate precepts of it, nor can the conscience of the best heathen, that never heard of Christ, accuse him for not inquiring after Christ, nor ever did, which doth accuse him for the breach of those rules which are evident by the light of it. But it condemns in concurrence with the gospel; when the object of faith is discovered by that, and the evidence appears to be of divine authority, the law of nature urgeth the command to believe, both as we are bound to believe and obey the supreme governor, and also to preserve ourselves. And as it strengthens the command, so in the condemnation it strengthens the sentence. The law is quickened and spirited more by the gospel in its curses against an unbeliever. He must needs be miserable, which is condemned by the law, for the violation of its immediate precepts, and condemned by the law, in concurrence with the gospel, for the refusal of that.

(8.) God hath discovered his anger more against this sin of unbelief than any, both in his own children and in the Jews.

[1.] In his own children upon an act of unbelief. Moses was barred out of Canaan for one act of distrust of God; and he whose prayers had prevailed for the reprieving a murmuring nation from destruction, was not heard for himself because of his unbelief. God refuseth in the least to listen to him, but commands him silence when he did but desire to go over Jordan to see the good land: Deut. 3:26, 'Let it suffice thee: speak no more to me of this matter.' This resolution God backed with an oath, Deut. 4:21. The reason is expressed to be, 'because he believed not God to sanctify him in the eyes of the children of Israel,' Num. 20:12. Moses had not such a firm faith but he did sometimes stagger at those great things which were predicted to him. But this act of distrust being public, striking the rock when he should have but spoken to it, might have encouraged the infidelity of the people, to which they were prone enough, without the example of their governor to support them in it. This unbelief of Moses kindled God's anger against him. Before, God patiently bore all his excuses, when he first appointed him to deliver his people Israel, and answered his pleas, Exod. 3:11, Exod. 4:1, 10–12; but when after all he desires God to stretch out his own hand, as he had promised,—Exod. 3:20, 'I will stretch out my hand,' which is the meaning of Exod. 4:13, 'Send by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;' send by that hand that thou wilt send or stretch out; stretch out this hand of thine, for the hand of man is not able to perform it, wherein saith Dr Lightfoot,* he denied the mystery of redemption, which was to be wrought by a man, the Godhead going along with him,—upon this, 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against him,' ver. 14. But his unbelief still took its progress, in taking Zipporah and his children along with him, which he would not have done in that condition, had he believed the promise of God, Exod. 3:12, that the people should come to that place where he then was, in Midian, and serve God upon that mountain. Had he believed that promise, he would have left them still with Jethro till his return. For this distrust God sought to kill him, Exod. 4:24, and not for the delay of

circumcision, as some think, since God bore with the Israelites in the wilderness so long in the neglect of this ordinance, because of their frequent travel. If a particular distrust of God doth so incense him against his people, how must a gospel unbelief inflame him, which is a refusal or neglect of his Son, and the riches of his grace in him?

[2.] In the misery of the Jews. Why were they broken off from the root? Because of their unbelief, Rom. 11:20. Not the crucifying of Christ, which was but a fruit of this sin. Had they believed after that guilt of blood, they had enjoyed the fruits of the mercy of God, by their faith in the Redeemer. This was the sole reason their ancestors were shut out from the typical Canaan. Not for their murmuring, idolatry, and multitude of provocations, but for their unbelief, the root of the other sins; no mention is made of their other rebellions, this only is the ground of God's oath against them: Heb. 3:18, 19, 'So then we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.' What privileges had those people who are now cut off for this sin? They were chosen to be God's inheritance and portion, his vineyard, his spouse; he had 'chosen them above all people upon the face of the earth, to be a special people unto himself,' Deut. 7:6. 'Them he had known of all the families of the earth,' Amos 3:2. He was their lawgiver and their king, had nourished them in his bosom as a father, conducted them into Canaan, prescribed them a peculiar form of worship, secured them from their potent enemies round about them; overturned Egypt for their deliverance, 'gave Ethiopia for their ransom,' defeated the designs of their enemies against them. When God sent enemies to oppress them for some grievous crime committed against heaven, as when they fell into idolatry, and filled Jerusalem with the blood of the prophets, and for that were carried captives to Babylon, yet after they repented and sought his face, he was gracious to them, repented him of the evil, restored them to their inheritance, rebuilt their temple, made their enemies to be their friends, provided a succession of prophets to acquaint them with his will, yea, left them not without prophets in the time of their greatest desolations. He Had besides this chiefly promised the Messiah to this nation, of the seed of their fathers. His first intention of sending him

was to them: Mat. 15:24, 'The word of God was first to be spoken to them,' Acts 13:46. Christ did come of them according to the flesh, lived among them, distilled his doctrine in person for three years' space upon them, when he taught the Samaritans but two days, John 4:40, chose the apostles out of that nation, that were to spread the gospel over the world. But since they would not believe in the Messiah, neither by his own sermons, nor the sermons of the apostles, their own land hath spued them out. They are exposed to the miseries of the world, the derisions of men; their temple, and with that their main worship destroyed. And though they have sought him, in their manner, a longer term of years than ever they were a people before the coming of Christ (they came out of Egypt about the year of the world 2470, were destroyed about the year 3990; so that there were about 1520 years from the time of their coming out of Egypt to the destruction of Jerusalem), yet they have no voice to relieve them, no prophetic message to comfort them, the face of God is veiled from them, as their hearts are veiled from him, no nation hath been destroyed for them as before, but they are harassed by all, not the least dawn of deliverance appearing to them. All the covenants and agreements made with their fathers seem at present to be cancelled; and from their rejection, God took occasion to call the Gentiles, and to engraft the wild olives into the covenant of salvation. The destruction of their city was remarkable. God picked out one of the most merciful emperors that ever swayed the Roman sceptre to be the instrument of his justice, rather than some notorious tyrant steeped in blood, and fleshed with slaughters, that the punishment might more evidently appear to be the hand of heaven, and not the effect of the cruelty of man.* This heathen emperor took notice of the anger of God against them, by many prodigies, so that he said, he feared God would be angry with him, if he should spare them; and when he saw the blood spilt in Jerusalem, and the heaps of carcasses, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, calling God to witness, that it was none of his work and design to have so much blood shed. Eleven hundred thousand perished by the sword and famine, ninety thousand were sold for slaves. Never was the hand of God so heavy upon any people, as upon them, and this for their

unbelief. And whereas their other captivities were not above twenty, thirty, or forty years in the book of Judges, and seventy years in Babylon, they have now lain above one thousand six hundred years as a forlorn and forsaken people: 'Wrath is come upon them to the utmost,' 1 Thes. 2:16; he hath 'set on fire the foundations of the mountains,' and spent his arrows upon them, Deut. 32:22, 23. What did their adoption, their glory, the law, the divine oracles deposited among them, the promises to the patriarchs profit them, after their unbelief? 'If God spared not the natural branches,' shall he spare the strange branches that believe not? Rom. 11:21. How sharp will his eternal wrath be upon the unbeliever, since his temporal wrath upon the Jew hath been so dreadful! He will 'pour out his indignation,' and his wrathful anger shall take hold of them, Ps. 69:24. This discourse about the Jews proves our Saviour to be the Messiah, as well as the provocation of unbelief. This punishment must be for some grievous crime, greater than the causes of their other captivities. After their return from Babylon, they were not guilty of idolatry, or the slaughter of the prophets, till Christ came, whom they used worse than any of the prophets that went before him; and all this is come upon them, not simply for the crucifying Christ, but not knowing or believing 'the things which concerned their peace,' Luke 19:42. And they are in that destruction set forth as an example of the eternal wrath of God upon all final undervaluers of Christ, and neglecters of the things that concern their peace, as well as Sodom and Gomorrah in their temporal punishment, and destruction of their bodies by fire from heaven, are set forth for an example, 'suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,' Jude 7. In the Scripture there are always some things of a greater and eternal concern couched under the historical part of it. Who, in reading the story of Melchisedec's coming to congratulate Abraham for his victory, would have thought him to be so great a type of Christ, had not David, Ps. 110, and after him the apostle, Heb. 7, informed us of it? Who would have regarded the destruction of Sodom, but as an effect of God's temporal justice, had not the apostle here informed us of its being a type of eternal fire? In like manner this deplorable desolation of the Jews, is but a type of the miserable destruction of unbelievers to eternity, whatever privileges they might

have enjoyed on earth, and howsoever dear to God they might have imagined themselves.

2. Why doth final unbelief render a man infallibly the object of the wrath of God?

1. Because of the greatness of the sin. It is greater than any breach of the covenant of works can be.

(1.) It is a more manifest enmity to God's government of the world. When the covenant of works was transgressed, God as the rector required satisfaction by death and blood, according to the tenor of the violated law, and as a tender Father provided a surety to give a sufficient one, whereby to preserve his own rights which had been invaded, and relieve his creature which had been ruined. In not accepting the surety God had procured, we deny him the honour of his sovereignty, and the restoration of the rights of his government. We count him unworthy of any satisfaction, maintain our rebellion against him as justly grounded, and account ourselves innocent when we are criminal, since we will not own the satisfaction he hath procured, as if no satisfaction were due to him; which must imply that either we account ourselves no offenders, or God none of our governor, or that we are able to make him a requital ourselves, which is also a contradiction to the rights of government, since he hath an authority to appoint what satisfaction he pleaseth, according to the law which was settled by him, and broken by man. Since God provided a surety for us wherein he could acquiesce, he had a double right, both as rector and benefactor, to appoint what conditions should be performed by the creature before he should be admitted to the benefit of this charter he had sealed by the blood of his Son. The not accepting these conditions is a manifest injury to him, as he is his governor, and a gracious governor; because it is against not only a sovereign command, but a command of grace. It is as much his command to us to believe, as not to commit murder and adultery; and the breaking this command speaks more of enmity to him than the breaking the others. He hath settled it as an eternal law, and his

full resolve 'that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John 5:23. That every man without exception should honour the Son in the work of redemption, as the Father in the work of creation; and 'he that honours not the Son honours not the Father which hath sent him.' He that denies the honour of faith to Christ, denies the honour of homage and fealty to God, and disparageth the government of his Father, who as rector of the world appointed him, and under the same quality accepted him. Christ is the immediate representative of God, the image of the glorious God. The laws of God and the laws of Christ are the same, Ps. 2:3; the cords and bands belong jointly to 'the Lord and his anointed;' to reject the laws of the one is to violate the authority of the other. What is done against the representative is against the majesty of the person represented by him. The Lord and his anointed can no more be separated in their authority than they can in their essence. If the Father be in the Son and the Son in the Father, John 10:38, the reproach cast upon the one redounds upon the other, as well as the entertainment of the one is said to be the reception of the other: Mat. 10:40, 'He that receives me, receives him that sent me.' If God pleads the cause of his servants, if those who rise against Moses are said to speak against God, Num. 21:5, and the murmurings against him are called the 'murmurings against the Lord,' Exod. 16:2, 7, and the rejecting of Samuel was a rejecting the government of God, 1 Sam. 8:7, can less be said of the neglect of him whom God hath sent, not as a servant from a lord, but a son from a father? What greater evidence of a rooted enmity can there be against the sovereignty of a prince, than after multitudes of rebellions, tenders of gracious terms, a long series of invitations to accept of him, a desire that they might be restored to the happiness they had forfeited; after all this not to be reduced to his sceptre? The case is the same with us: God hath provided all means necessary to our restoration; nothing is wanting but our own concurrence with it. The enmity is greater, since there is no failure on God's part, since he hath done more than he was bound as a creator to do, or had need to do; and is it not just that obstinate rebels, who will not observe the rules of his government, should fall under the rod of his wrath?

(2.) It is a high ingratitude. The transgression of the law was against the authority and goodness of God; this against his authority, and against a goodness of an higher elevation, springing up in bowels of compassion, spreading its arms wider than in creation, and offering to confer a more excellent and durable happiness; it is against the tenders of remission in the blood of the Son of God, which in the first transgression man had no knowledge of (for there was nothing of grace mentioned in the first covenant). And who will not judge it more criminal in itself to slight or neglect the grace of a prince, in conjunction with his authority, than to violate only the authority of a prince in breaking his lawful and just command? Would it not be a crime worthy the indignation of all men, if twice, thrice, nay, innumerable times, the sincerest tenders of the greatest good should be refused? Who would have compassion for such a refractory person? Is not unbelief the more horrible crime in them who acknowledge Christ for the Son of God, the mediator between God and them, whereby they are so far from rendering it in the least manner excusable, that they highly aggravate it?

[1.] Consider the greatness of the mercy. God prevented us by his love: 1 John 4:10, 'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;' procured a surety for us, who valued our redemption above the pleasure of the body he assumed, and appointed him for us when we had a desire to persist in our rebellion, not only after we had offended him, but when we were in actual offences still against him: Rom. 5:8, 'when we were yet sinners;' not only when we had sinned, but when we were still adding one crime to another; and this surety hath expended his treasures to purchase our deliverance, hath submitted to death to prevent our suffering of it; he hath 'abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. 1:10. He destroyed death, that had a power over us by the immutable sentence of the law, took away the right it had, despoiled the law of its power to condemn us, by condemning sin by the effusion of his blood on the cross, whereby the law had acquired a right of condemning us, and discovered the way to an immortal life, which we were estranged

from by the darkness of sin, brought a message of peace from the bosom of the Father, whereby we might be eternal gainers. It is such a free mercy, that, if it had not been manifested, not God but we should have been the only losers. No mercy like it, no mercy can exceed it, no other mercy can equal it. 'So God loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son,' John 3:16; a so beyond expression, a so beyond imagination; nothing can surpass it but the sending him again to suffer; and this only would be in circumstantial of repetition, not in the essentials and nature of the mercy.

[2.] From hence measure the greatness of the sin. The height, depth, length, and breadth of the mercy is the only rule to measure the dimensions of the sin against it by. The stronger and louder the bowels of mercy are which are slighted, the greater and blacker is the sin of despising him. The goodness of God in procuring, and the grace of God in accepting, a surety, are denied by this sin. Every act of it contemns the provisions of grace and contentments of justice, the attendances of patience, the tenderness of bowels, and the satisfactory blood of the Son of God. Is it not a strange carriage that when God is so merciful to offer remission, man should be so obstinate as to refuse it, and would rather die in his sin, hateful to God, and miserable for himself, than live by the Son of God, so acceptable to God and beneficial to man; and when, besides the outward preaching of the gospel, there have been, by the common grace of the Spirit, some inward stirrings and approbation of the terms, which yet have vanished into a non-compliance? The frequenter those motions, the greater the ingratitude added to the debts of all other sins contracted before. This unthankfulness for such a benefit is alleged as the cause of men's condemnation: John 3:10, 'When light is come into the world, men love darkness rather than light.' When God hath provided a way to remove the guilt of their sins, the world will not part with the pleasure and profit of their sins. Can there be a baser requital than to be a partner with Judas in betraying him, with Pilate in condemning him, with the Jews in crucifying him? What do we else but approve of all the barbarous usage he met with from the Jews, when we despise his authority in

his evangelical command, refuse his person in his gracious proffers, and undervalue his sufferings by not applying them?

Is not then a dreadful punishment of this sin very righteous? By the law of nature, the greater kindness a creature receives, the greater punishment he doth deserve if he prove ungrateful. Since gospel grace exceeds all the benefits of creation, it is reasonable that the neglects of it should be attended with the greater punishment. When men will refuse the acceptance of it, and conformity to the will of God, which can only fit them for true happiness, a fuller measure of wrath is due to them that slight the fullest expense of mercy. Justice would not be justice if it used not them with the greatest severity that abuse grace with the greatest indignity: what is greatest in the rank of sins, deserves the greatest misery in the rank of penalties. The greater benefit is conferred, the greater guilt is contracted by the neglect, and a stronger subjection to punishment in the order of justice. If it be a crime deserving a severe reflection to outrage an innocent person that never did us wrong, it is much more to spurn at a person who hath laid the foundation of our greatest good, and offereth that good to us upon the easiest terms. Such a carriage to a prince would be a greater indignity; how inconceivable a crime is it then against the King of kings, the Lord of glory, God blessed for ever, under all those inexpressible circumstances of innocence in his person, flames in his affection, kindness to the last drop of blood, and continued patience in waiting for our receiving the atonement! The rebellion of all other sins is wrapped up in this: John 15:22, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin;' so the gall of all other miseries is distilled into the punishment due to it. It is fit the furnace of wrath should be heated, to answer the flames of love which have been shooting towards them.

[3.] It is a sin against a clearer and fuller light and undeniable revelation. The gospel hath been first published by the Son of God in person, spread over the world by his apostles and their successors as the commissioners of Christ, entertained by multitudes in all ages since, transmitted to us in writing, delivered down to us by the

contentions of our ancestors for the faith and the blood of martyrs. Nothing we believe in the world but it is upon less reason than we have to believe this. The belief of other things, for which we have little reason, and in some no reason, will aggravate our unbelief of those great things for which we have so much reason.

(1.) Heathens have had a less light, and abused it, and shall not escape punishment. This way of argument the apostle useth,*Rom. 1:16–19, to assure unbelievers of a dreadful vengeance. Though the design of the gospel be nothing but righteousness, life, and salvation to the believer, yet it breathes as much wrath against the neglecter as it doth happiness to the embracer; and without any charge of injustice upon God. For others who had a less light than that of the gospel, which discovered to them the power and eternity of God, it rendered them without any apology for themselves. The closing their eyes against that natural light, or abusing of it, and keeping natural truth in unrighteousness, i.e. lying in their sins against all the beams of light from the creation, will subject them to eternal punishment. The heathens had nothing but the dim light of nature, the effluxes of divine patience; but they could not read the covenant of grace in the motions of the heavens and orderly seasons of the year; they could not behold the Sun of righteousness in the material sun in the firmament; the heavens discovered the glory of a creator, but not the grace of a redeemer; there were characters of divine wisdom and power in the frame of the world, but nothing of his grace and pardoning mercy; therefore they are not condemned for not believing in Christ, since a mediator was not made known to them. They were bound to no more than Adam was; but Adam was not bound to believe a supernatural mystery till God had revealed it: and it cannot be expected that they, who never had an account of Christ, should believe in him. 'How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Rom. 10:14; and if they be under an impossibility of believing for want of a revelation, how can they be condemned for not believing? But the sentence against them is grounded upon their despising the voice of the works of nature, the common mercy of God, and his patience manifested in them, whereby he called them to

some reflection upon themselves, and repentance for their iniquities. Since the law of nature was given man as a rule in creation,* they shall be examined whether they have done the things agreeable to the law written in their consciences, and they shall be judged according to the several measures of the light of reason which they had; for it cannot be supposed that the barbarous nations that lived in a thick darkness, and had not the advantage of a polite and learned education to improve their reasons, shall have the same measure of judgment with those who had the waterings and dressings of a sounder education. (But neither one nor the other shall be judged according to the gospel, which exacts faith in the Redeemer). And according to this rule, not a man of them can escape; and if it were the only rule to try all men by, not a man, from Adam to the last that shall be born upon the earth by natural generation, can avoid the just condemnation of God, because not a man of them but hath, one way or other, and that several times, transgressed that law; for all are become guilty before God.

(2.) The Jews have had a less light than those under the gospel, though clearer than that of the heathens, and upon the abuse of this they shall not escape. The Jews who died before the coming of Christ, shall be tried according to the law of nature expressed in the decalogue, and that particular law of ceremonies given to them, wherein the Mediator was veiled. The Jews had the gospel printed in types and allegories, wrapped up in the pillar of a cloud; Christ was not come in the flesh, nor the Spirit poured out upon the world; they could not see the beauty of a redeemer for the smoke of their sacrifices, nor have a full prospect of his face through the grates and lattices of the ceremonies. There were also different measures of light among them, which may mitigate the condemnation of some, but not be a sufficient bar against a sentence of death. † For those of the Jewish religion, that did not believe in those promises or prophecies of the Messiah, in the time of the first entrance into Canaan, shall not have so great a punishment as those that lived after, when clearer prophecies were added. All judgment shall be according to the measure of light afforded; according to the measure of it, God

expects a suitable return; for 'to whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required,' Luke 12:48. Nor shall those that died in the wilderness, or first entered into Canaan, have so light a sentence as those of the old world, with whom the Spirit of Christ strove, but upon the account of one single promise given to Adam; whereas the other had an increase of promises to Abraham, deliverances to themselves, an addition of types to represent the things promised, and the intention of them, to their eyes, which were stronger and more unanswerable grounds upon which the Spirit did strive with them in those times. Those of the Jews who had the least light of revelation, shall have a smarter punishment than the heathens, who had the strongest light of nature: 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile,' Rom. 2:9. As the Jew had the priority in privileges, so he shall have in the anguish prepared for the wicked. And many of them in the days of Christ in the flesh neglected him, not so much wilfully as out of ignorance, and prejudicate opinions of a conquering Messiah. If they could escape upon the witness of Paul, or rather upon the witness of the Holy Ghost, they should find relief; Paul would not deny his own writing, nor the Holy Ghost his own inditing: 1 Cor. 2:8, 'Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;' no, nor Christ his own testimony upon the cross, that they knew not what they did, Luke 23:34. But can we call the Holy Ghost or the Redeemer to witness for us, if we believe not?

(3.) We have a clearer light than any of them had. It was indeed by his own Son that God spoke to the Jews, Heb. 1:2, but he did but begin to speak it; the stronger confirmations were afterwards by the gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out upon men: Heb. 2:3, 4, 'God bearing witness from heaven' to the truth of his doctrine. We have the light of nature to answer for, we are bound to this as much as the heathen; they had no more of the light of nature than we have; the Jew had less understanding of the ceremonies than we have, they saw the types, and we have the manifestation of the substance, we have Christ in a plain letter and fairer print. We have the light of

heathens, the light of the Jews, and a glorious light superadded to both those.

Now, it is according to this light God doth proportion the punishment of unbelievers under the gospel. The judgment, according to the apostle, respects two sorts of persons: 2 Thes. 1:8, 'Those that know not God,' and those 'that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The heathens that knew not God, when they had light enough in the creation to know him: and they that obey not the gospel, whether veiled or open; as veiled, it takes in the Jews before Christ; as open, it comprehends all to whom the gospel is preached. The question shall be asked such persons, whether they did believe in the name of the Son of God as the only mediator; and those that shall be convinced of a final unbelief, or disobedience to the evangelical declarations, shall incur the more grievous condemnation, because to the transgression of the law of nature, will be added over and above, the transgression of a special command of God, respecting their recovery. According to the rule of justice it must exceed the condemnation of the rest; since they have lived in the bosom of the church, and besides the neglect of that common to them with the heathen, have rejected the mediator made known to them, and not to the heathen. If the light of the darkest of them be sufficient to convict them before God without any excuse, much more must the light, revealed by the word, aggravate the guilt of men that close their eyes against it. They have not only the discoveries of God in nature, but the discoveries of God in grace, to answer for. The more excellent the truth is that is disobeyed, the greater the sinfulness of the disobedience; Hosea 8:12, 'I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were accounted as a strange thing.' If the choicest revelation that God ever made, did not aggravate the punishment, why should the apostle say, 2 Peter 2:21, 'It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,' if they were in the same condition, wherein they were before they knew it? But how reasonable and righteous is the misery of those who have not only had the outward declarations of the gospel, but some common illumination of their minds, some motions of the Spirit, some

approbations of the doctrine? If Paul had mercy because his unbelief was in ignorance, what mercy can they expect whose unbelief is with knowledge? 1 Tim. 1:13. Not that his ignorance deserved a pardon, for who can ascribe any merit to ignorance? The crucifying of Christ, the most horrid wickedness that ever the world saw, heaps not that guilt upon men whose hands were red with his blood, that unbelief doth upon men, who in opinion pretend to acknowledge him. The crime of the one was extenuated by their ignorance, and the crime of the other aggravated by their knowledge, as also, by the frequency of the impressions made upon them by the word. Well, then, if heathens shall be condemned, who had only the material heavens, and the sensitive, and insensitive creatures upon the earth preaching to them, who had only God in his works, and the Jews who had God speaking to them in legal ceremonies, what will become of those who have had the voice of God, Christ, and redeeming blood calling to them in the word, and neglected all?

(4.) This sin is a refusal of the only way of expiation of sin. When the law was violated, a relief was provided in the gospel. Because the law uttered not one syllable of forgiveness, the transgression of the law was not an offence against pardoning mercy, as the unbelief of the gospel is. This relieving mercy could not have appeared in the world in a contradiction to the justice of God; this, to speak according to the manner of men, would have made a war in the divine nature, without the sacrifice of the Son of God in our nature. For because he assumed not the nature of angels, the fallen spirits are exposed to the rigours of justice, without any relief of mercy. If Adam had truly repented of his crime, he could not have obtained pardon without the satisfaction of the law, which was as silent in the command of repentance, as it was in the declaration of a pardon. When, therefore, there is a remedy provided, and no other remedy but this, nor can be any other remedy; since no valuable sacrifice can be imagined for the taking away of sin but this, those that neglect it, render themselves incapable of security, by shutting themselves out of the only refuge. In all human contracts, a promise is only received* by assenting to and believing it. Though something may be taken from a man

unwilling to part with it, yet nothing can be given to a man unwilling to accept it; what right soever is transferred by the donor in a way of promise, is established by the other's assenting to it. If a prince promises a courtier a gift upon the performance of easy conditions, and he will not believe the word of the king, nor perform the reasonable conditions, the promise is not only void in itself, but the prince justly offended with his behaviour. Had the terms of the covenant been very hard, provided they had not been impossible, the damnation had been just had they been wilfully neglected; but they are as reasonable as can be: repentance and faith. Is it not fit the justice of God should be acknowledged in its equity, and the holiness of God in its beauty, by a sensibleness of our crimes; his grace in its freeness, by an acceptance of its provision; and his sovereignty acknowledged by the payment of an homage to him? Who would not count that rebel a sufferer by double justice who refuseth the pardon of his great rebellions, which he might have only for the acceptance of it, a sensibleness of his offence, and a sincere promise of his utmost service? They are such reasonable conditions, that the honour of God, as well as the honour of a prince, would not be provided for, or have a salvo without them. If men will sell themselves to the slavery of a condemned sin, and a conquered devil, they can charge none with boring their ears to a perpetual misery, but their own folly. He that will choose to die by the sting of a fiery serpent, rather than live by the sight of the brazen one, can impute his ruin to no other but himself.

Christ hath made an expiation for sin, quenched the flaming sword that stopped the entrance into paradise. If men will not set their feet in that way, nor make any inquiries after it; if they cast behind their back all exhortations to it, and never consider them in their minds, upon whom can they charge their destruction but upon themselves?

If a man be in love with his misery, and will not stoop to him that would relieve him; if he prefer his guilt before the expiation, his deplorable condition before a Saviour, his filthiness before a righteousness, it is juster that he should perish by the sin he chose,

than be happy by a Saviour he refused. His own act is in the nature of a confession of the equity of God's sentence, since God hath linked the gospel and everlasting life so close together that the one cannot be received or refused without the other. They 'judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life,' by 'putting away the gospel' from them, Acts 13:46. He tacitly declares that he would rather have God angry with him than pacified, when he refuseth the only means of a reconciliation. And the justice of his punishment is evident by the value of the propitiation which he refuseth, it being that which was the salvation of all the ancient believers before the oblation of the sacrifice, valuable enough to be the salvation of devils; that which was so prevalent with God in our Saviour's first consent to it, as to turn the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace; that blood which, sprinkled upon the soul, can turn the edge of the angel's destroying sword; that pure and spotless sacrifice which is the feast of God in heaven, which is daily presented to him by our Saviour in his office of advocacy, 1 John 2:1, 2. Can there be less justice than to inflict damnation upon those who wilfully neglect that which hath been the only way for the salvation of millions, and might be efficacious for theirs, if they would accept of it upon God's terms? Nay, they impose upon themselves a necessity of damnation, who cast away the means of salvation. How can his chains be knocked off, that slights redemption? How can he be washed, that stops by his infidelity the blood of Christ from flowing out upon him? What disease can be healed, if the only proper remedy for it be not applied? Is not he as much guilty of his own death, that rejects a medicine, tears a plaster off from his wounds, as he that cuts his own throat with a knife? They have but the fruits of their own wilfulness, and must at last subscribe to the equity of God's judgment, because the desert of it was their own choice.

3. What kind of misery this is.

It is

1. Inevitable. The end of the enemies of the cross of Christ is destruction, Phil. 3:18. The righteous hath a 'sure reward,' Prov. 11:18; the unrighteous must have as sure a punishment: 'perishing from the way' is the absolute issue of the 'kindling of his wrath,' Ps. 2:12. Death will certainly enter in at that door; there is no more possibility of escape than for a man mortally wounded in a vital part to avoid death entering in at his wound. Every man must render an account before the judgment seat of Christ. Shall men render an account of their time, wealth, the abuse of the faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies? and shall they not as certainly render an account of that which is more precious than all these: the grace of God, and the blood of Christ offered to them and injured by them? Is there any shelter from the all-seeing eye of God, in the caves of the deep or under the mountains of the world? Poor Adam sought it in the thickets of paradise, but was forced to come out at the call, 'Adam, where art thou?' Gen. 3:9, 10. What refuge can be imagined? The covenant of grace is the city of refuge against the pursuit of the covenant of works; that is our hope under our fetters for the breaches of the law, Heb. 6:18. Where can we fix an anchor of hope to secure ourselves from the storms of this? The apostle puts the question indeed, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. 2:3. But the resolution of it was above his invention; he knew not one tittle of encouragement in the whole book of God, though no man better acquainted with it. What do I speak of the apostle? The Holy Ghost himself, who indited what the apostle did write, knew none. The transgressions of the law subject men to a desert of condemnation; but this sin exposeth men to a necessity of damnation, since all the methods of God for procuring remission have been rendered useless by the refusal of that merit that purchased it, and that mercy that appointed and offered it. When justice condemns in the law, a liberty of appeal is reserved to mercy in the gospel; if mercy in the gospel condemns for want of the conditions necessary to the enjoyment, what reserve is left? No way of relief but by injustice, which is not to be found in the divine nature.* After man had wounded himself, and sunk down at the feet of the law, a promise was clapped in as a plaster; but is there a

syllable in the whole Scripture of any other remedy? It never yet thought of any other security; God never revealed any other for the repair of his own honour, which suffered by sin; and why should the creature imagine any other for his own recovery? Yes; but we know not but God may have a reserve in his own counsel. Certainly men that pretend to believe the gospel must have some such conceit; they could not else be such desperate enemies to themselves as not to labour after a thorough work of faith. But would any but a prodigiously mad man run the hazard of such a conceit? What footing can such an imagination have after all God's declarations to the contrary? If the laws of a king threaten an unavoidable punishment for a crime, would not that man be a bedlam that would venture the transgression of it upon hopes of a reserve, when he finds not a syllable in the law for such an encouragement, but the whole design to the contrary? Necessity of state sometimes is a bridle to restrain the punishment of an offender; but the eternal order of God is so constituted that there can be no necessity upon him, for the advantage of heaven or earth, to remit the punishment of a final unbeliever.

Consider,

[1.] It is a God who hath passed his word. God never speaks but he intends to perform; his words shall stand before men's imaginations of security; his conditions he will not alter. He cannot save such men; his oath stands in the way; his repeated declarations are a bar against it. What greater obligations than an oath, and the oath of God, which is a swearing by himself? and as sure as I am God, and as sure as I live, I will do such a thing? Shall God deny his own deity for a rebel's security? Heb. 3:18, 'To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?' They shall not enter into a gospel state, to have the benefits of Christ, who is the rest of God. Since the Scripture is written for our instruction, it concerns every man in a state of unbelief, and assures them, if it be final, they shall not set a foot within the gates of heaven. God never passeth his oath but to confirm what he is resolutely bent to perform; he swears to the

promises, that the believers may have strong consolation; he swears to the threatening, that unbelievers may have dismal apprehensions. Some humbled souls think God is not so merciful as he declares; he swears to expel their doubts. Presumptuous persons think God is not so just; he swears to expel their vain conceits. This sin ties up, as it were, the hands of an omnipotent mercy from saving such a one. The apostle intimates that God is not able to save without faith (Rom. 11:23, 'If they bide not still in unbelief, they shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again'), in asserting that God is able to graft the Jews in upon their faith. God is not morally able to do anything against his word and settled methods of his grace; and because God hath passed his word, and denounced those judgments which he executes, he is said to slay men 'by the word of his mouth and the breath of his lips,' Isa. 11:4; and the sharp sword wherewith he smites the nations goes out of the mouth of Christ, Rev. 19:15.

[2.] God hath promised to take the punishment of final unbelievers into his own hands. The revenge of injuries done by one man to another belongs to God, and he will recompense them; the vengeance of injuries done to his Son doth as much belong to him. He values the obedience of Christ in his death too high to suffer men to slight it without the recompence of a certain indignation; and who can avoid the recompence he will inflict? Heb. 10:30, 31. What sanctuary can there be against the wrath of an all-knowing God, who hath promised Christ to take the work into his own hands, and be the destroyer of all his enemies? Ps. 90:1, 'Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.' He will employ all his power against them. This power is ascribed here to the Father, not that the Son is unable to conquer his enemies, but to shew his mighty affection to the office of priesthood he had settled his Son in, and his resolution to maintain the rights of it, and revenge any indignity offered to it; also because acts of power are ascribed to the Father, as acts of wisdom to the Son. God cannot be true to his Son, nor true to himself, having passed his word to his Son, and published that word to us, unless he punished unbelievers. This is part of the honour God intends him, wherein he will take pleasure, as well as in seeing him sit gloriously

at his right hand; and this he had assured men of before, that he would require exactly an account of their refusal to listen to the words of the great prophet which should speak in his name.* And lest any think that, though it be unavoidable, if they fall into the hands of the living God, yet they may have some shelter from his fury; no, the right hand of God, his hand of strength and power, shall find out the enemies of Christ in their most secret recesses: Ps. 21:8, 'Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies, thy right hand shall find out them that hate thee;' none shall escape the being hurled into a fiery oven by the power of his hand. The psalm was anciently applied by the Chaldee paraphrast to the King Messiah. Who can rescue the soul that is grasped in the wrathful hand of God? What champion can keep off the blow, unless it be one that can match God in strength and power? Nor will God be diverted by the cries of obstinate rebels, when he was not persuaded by the strong cries and prayers of Christ to take the cup of suffering out of his hand.

Besides, though Christ be clad in his priestly garments, he hath 'feet like brass, as if they burnt in a furnace,' heavy and hot to trample upon his enemies, Rev. 1:13, 15; he hath 'eyes like a flame of fire' to find them, and 'feet like brass' to crush them; so that upon all accounts the misery is unavoidable. The condition of the heathens renders them inevitably miserable; for, being 'without Christ,' they are 'without hope,' Eph. 2:12. Faith in the promise is the foundation of the hope of blessedness; no freedom without it from the sentence of death to which the law hath adjudged us; no freedom from the spiritual death which sin hath engendered in us. It is as inevitable as the misery of devils; they perish because they have no mediator, and men perish because they will not receive a mediator.

2. Speedy misery. As Christ is a swift help, so he is declared to be a 'swift witness' against the unrighteousness of men, Mal. 3:5. God is quick in his judgments where the gospel is contemned; the black, red, and pale horse—plague, war, and famine—followed the heels of the white horse, to cut off them that would not be conquered by the rider on it, Rev. 6:2, 4, 5, 8. God is more quick and severe in his

justice under the gospel than before; the former times before the exhibition of Christ were the times of God's patience, wherein 'God winked at the times of ignorance; but if his command of repentance and faith be neglected, nothing is to be expected but a severe judgment, Acts 17:30, 31. As he hath revealed his righteousness 'from faith to faith,' so he hath 'revealed his wrath from heaven,' Rom. 1:17, 18. When he made a promise of the effusion of his Spirit in the times of the gospel, Joel 2:28, 29, he couples with it a threatening of judgments as the fruit of the contempt of the gospel: ver. 30, 31, 'I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, before the day of the Lord,' i.e. from the time of the pouring forth the Spirit, and the contempt of his grace, there shall be a confusion in all parts of the world where the gospel is contemned, and that in a constant succession till the great day of the Lord. We may know to what cause to ascribe the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood in a nation. The same reason of the speediness of judgment holds in the case of a particular person; whosoever 'bears thorns and briers, is nigh unto cursing,' Heb. 6:8. The good earth is said to be blessed by God; but the bad earth is not said to be cursed, that we may not despair, but 'nigh to cursing,' that we may hasten our fruitfulness. It cannot be long before the power of God will vindicate his injured mercy, and deliver men up into the hands of justice, to answer for the violations of his law and contempt of his grace. The time of God's waiting is bounded in narrow limits. The life is a short vapour, which appears a while and quickly vanisheth. What are a few days or years—yea, or Methuselah's age—to keep off the plague which shall last for ever? Unconceivably less than a grain of sand, compared with the whole mass of heaven and earth, if pounded into dust.

3. Sharp misery. It abides; the first wound is not so smart as a constant gnawing of a vulture. As the apostle could imagine no way to escape it, so he could not imagine any way to express it: Heb. 10:29, 'Of how much sorer punishment?' He leaves it to every man's fancy to screw it to the highest. So sore, that the malefactor shall feel it without being able to declare the torture of it. And thus Peter

leaves it to men to imagine, since he was enable to express it: 1 Peter 4:17, 18, 'What shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel?' and 'where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?' We can no more conceive the terror of the wrath due to this, than we can conceive the grandeur of that love which has been abused, and the dignity of the person of his Son which is injured by it. The most scorching receptacles in that fiery oven seem to be reserved for unbelievers: Luke 12:46, 'The Lord shall appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.' A vengeance is due to such, Heb. 10:30, which is not a simple punishment, but one with rigour. It knows no mitigation; not a drop of a water will be allowed to temper the devouring flame. Hell would rather solicit for a further addition of wrath to one that despised the only begotten of the Father; a man's own conscience will tell him it is rather below than above his demerit. Though the punishment of sin against the law was a separation from God, yet this separation may admit of degrees; one may be further cast from God than another, into the depths and lowest dungeon of hell. The young man was in a nearness to the kingdom of heaven, yet not in it, but in a state of alienation from God.

(1.) God takes the punishment of such into his own hand. God will be a 'consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29. Fire is the sharpest of all the elements, insinuates into every part of combustible matter, and the wrath of God into every part of the soul; it devours with an invincible force whatsoever it lays hold on. Though God be full of goodness and mercy to them that believe, yet he is like a consuming fire to those that scorn the covenant of his Son; and with no less, but much more, fury will he consume the slights of that, than he did the despisers of the old administration. This sin puts God upon the discharging all his fury. The breath of his mouth, that before invited men, shall blow the fire: Isa. 30:33, 'The breath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.' It is not a simple punishment, but wrath abides, the wrath of an infinite God, infinitely understanding to invent, and of infinite power to inflict the bitterest pains; which must be more sharp than any in this life, because all the bars of patience which stopped the overflowing scourge, and the long-suffering of God upon

the account of the mediation of Christ, shall abstain from any further exercise. It must be as sharp as justice armed with infinite power can render it, according to the capacity of the subject. What cannot Omnipotence do? As when the covenant is received, God is our God in the employment of his infinite perfections for us; so when the covenant is outraged, God is our judge in the employment of his infinite perfections against us. Patience shall not stir a finger, mercy will look contemptibly* upon them. When the first covenant was broke, justice punished and mercy relieved; when the second is finally despised, justice inflicts the punishment, and mercy contemns the sufferer. That mercy which called them will laugh at their calamity, Prov. 1:24, 26, 27, 28. It is not vindictive justice, but tender mercy, which calls men to repentance. It is not vindictive justice men will seek in their distresses, but pity and compassion from their judge. But that attribute whereby God stretched out his hand in kindness, that attribute which men in their anguish will call upon for relief, will not only be speechless, but mock, when their fear comes. As justice joins hands with mercy in the pardon of a believer, upon the satisfaction of Christ, so mercy will join hands with justice for the punishment of an unbeliever that either spurns at it or neglects it. Justice shall hurl them in, and mercy roll the stone upon the mouth of hell. Mercy will mock them, and mocking is none of the lightest ingredients in the punishment of a malefactor. How heavy must that condemnation be, which is pronounced by a mercy turned into fury! Since God inflicts it, the punishment for the neglect of his grace will be suited to that joy he had in the effusions of it. We may measure his anger against the rebels by the delight he had in his Son for undertaking the work of redemption, and the joy he expressed upon his performing it. No greater honour could be bestow upon his return to heaven than the seating him at his right hand, giving him power over all the angels, more terrible judgments than must fall upon them that despise the priesthood of Christ, so acceptable to God, which shall, by the decree of God, like Aaron's rod, the type of it, flourish for ever.

(2.) It will be suited to the greatness of what hath been contemned. As much as the covenant excels the other in grace and glory, so much shall the vengeance for the despising it exceed the punishment due to the transgression of the other. A heinous sin deserves intolerable plagues. Sins against the light of nature are of a meaner tincture than those against the gospel. There was a death without mercy for the transgression of the law of Moses, Heb. 10:28, composed only of the shadows of this; must there not then be an addition of vengeance to those that make light of the substance? The punishment in order of justice must be suited to the greatness of the crime. As it is a total injustice to let a crime pass with impunity, so it is a partial injustice to let it pass with a punishment less than it merits. The dignity of the person injured, the Son of God, and God in him, greatens the crime, and consequently the punishment. With what an infelicity must such an indignity to God be attended! We are not only to answer to justice for the violations of an holy law, but the expense of a tender mercy. And if an offence against God, as the author of our being, deserves at the hands of an infinitely offended majesty a just recompence of reward, much more must the rejecting the tenders of his grace, whereby as a fountain of goodness he would send forth richer streams of happiness than at the creation. We abuse that which we had not the least right to demand, nor God the least obligation to give. Some things the nature of God obligeth him onto. God might choose whether he would create man; but when he resolves to create a rational creature, the holiness of God obligeth him to create him holy. He may choose whether he would make a covenant of grace; but when he hath made it, his nature will not permit him to start from it. God might choose whether he would offer grace; and therefore the freer the grace, the blacker the abuse of it, and the sorer the punishment due to it. As there were liberal showers of grace, there shall be fuller vials of wrath; as grace to the utmost, so wrath to the brim. The devil, who had not the least share of created wisdom, by his abuse of it, rendered himself most accursed; and men by the abuse of grace, render themselves most abhorred by God. As where sin hath abounded grace is sweeter, so where grace hath abounded, and is not received, wrath is sharper, and the heat of wrath is

proportioned to the flame of love. And as it is against the greatest mercy, so it is against a greater evidence of God's holiness and justice in the death of his Son. The end of the death of Christ was that 'God might shew himself just;' Rom. 3:26, 'that he might be just,' i.e. known to be just. Now, after this public discovery of his justice, this sin is a daring his justice more than any sin under the law. Then there was only a verbal declaration of the justice of God; but in the death of Christ, the highest sensible demonstration of it to the sons of men.

(3.) It will be suited to the excellent rewards of faith. As the rewards of faith are so great, that neither ear hath heard, nor heart can conceive, so must the plagues for unbelief answer the greatness of those. The reward of Adam's obedience appears not to be any other than a continuance in that happy state in paradise wherein he was created; wherein it is like he might after some trial of his obedience have been confirmed by the grace of God, as the angels are in their glorious estate in heaven. As his reward seems not altogether to be the same which is promised in the gospel, viz., a being with Christ for ever to behold his glory; so the punishment threatened upon his transgression of the command is not the same with the punishment threatened in the gospel; and though it was more than a temporal death, or a separation of soul and body, which seems to be too light a punishment for an offence against the infinite majesty of God, and would not have answered the enormity of the crime (could the pain of a few hour's satisfy God for a sin, whose guilt and filth would be perpetual without pardon and sanctification?); yet it was not so bitter a death as is threatened upon the breach of the new covenant; for all punishment follows the measure of the ingratitude and greatness of the obligation, which was not the same in his sin as it is in ours; and therefore it is expressed by the addition of death unto death: 2 Cor. 2:16, 'The savour of death unto death;' a death with more pangs superadded by the gospel to the death inflicted upon Adam by the law. As those that have believed in the name of the Son of God, and walked according to that faith, shall be eternally freed from all the curses of the moral law, and the dreadful threatenings

sprinkled in the gospel; so those that shall die in their unbelief, shall for ever lie under the curses of the one, and the executed threatenings of the other. We find that as the promises in the Old Testament were not so spiritual and clear, respecting for the most part the land of Canaan, and temporal goods; so the threatenings are not so sharp, respecting for the most part temporal losses and outward judgments. As the joys of heaven were, under that dispensation, veiled under temporal promises, so the terrors of hell were veiled under temporal curses. But in the gospel there are clearer promises of an eternal glory, and answerable to them, there are more dismal threatenings of an eternal loss. There is 'utter darkness' to answer an 'inheritance in light;' a never-dying worm to answer to everlasting joys; rivers of brimstone to answer to rivers of pleasures; an eternal separation from God, and the everlasting society of devils, to answer to an eternal Communion with God and the blessed angels.

(4.) It will be suited to the knowledge or means of knowledge men had. The heathens will have a single condemnation, for not improving the light of nature; the Jews a double, for neglecting that light, and the instructions of the law. A treble condemnation remains for them that neglect both these, and the discoveries of grace more glorious and plain, than nature or law with a richer manifestation ever could be. The damnation of the first will be a pleasure to the miseries of the last, who will have more than an ordinary damnation. To have Christ and his blood preached to men, engenders more knowledge than the instructions of the heavens, and the creatures of the earth, with a conscience guided by a dimmer light. Tyre and Sidon shall have a lighter sentence than Chorazin and Bethsaida; they might have reformed upon less means, when those were not converted by greater, Mat. 11:21–24. Tyre, a place of knowledge, famous for excellent arts, from whence a greater part of the Grecian learning was derived; a place of notorious idolatry, whence the Jews had sometime drawn the contagion; a place of great pride and luxury, threatened with grievous plagues by God, Ezek. 26; yet this place, though sinning against much natural knowledge, shall fare better than the cities of Judea. Sodom, the stain of mankind, a place

soaked in the dregs of villany, who sinned against an eminent deliverance bestowed upon them for the sake of Lot, and also against many admonitions from that person, who could not but testify the vexation of his righteous soul for their wickedness, that would have committed wickedness with the angels, and that when they were under the judicial hand of God striking them with blindness, guilty of those abominations which likely not a man in Capernaum was guilty of; yet this hell upon earth shall have a milder hell at the day of judgment than unbelieving Capernaum, a place that had often given entertainment to Christ in the days of his flesh, blasphemed not his doctrine when they heard it, nor ascribed his miracles to the devil when they saw them, as the pharisees did; yet those, for want of faith, shall be more inexcusable than the other; the one offended against the light of nature, the other against the light of grace, published by the mouth of the only Son of God. The means of grace men have had, will sharpen the sting of conscience to pierce more deep: 'The word shall judge men at the last day,' John 12:48. The doctrine of grace, and the instructions of the gospel, struck in upon their minds, shall rise up in their consciences, as so many witnesses against them. And though suppressed here by unrighteousness,* shall, like fire buried in a heap of ashes, sparkle again, and make their consciences as a fiery oven, as the expression is, Ps. 21:9, and engender a more enflamed hell within them, than all other miseries can without them. Every principle of truth, whether approved of or no, shall be as the sting of a scorpion; all which meeting together, shall render them more self-tormented creatures than the worst of the Tyrians, or the most villanous rakehell in Sodom, though there were no outward pain or misery to afflict them.

Well, then, it is a sore punishment: 'Then will he speak to men in his wrath.' When? When they 'take counsel against the Lord and his anointed, and cast away his cords from them,' Ps. 2:5, he will 'swallow them up in his wrath,' Ps. 21:9. The curses of the law brake men in pieces, but the rejected Son of God in the gospel, like a stone from an high ascent, grinds them to powder, Mat. 21:44. So that it

had been happy for them if grace had never appeared to them, since they have gained nothing by it but a more stinging damnation.

4. Irreversible wrath; it abides, permanent, not transient, not a volatile but a fixed wrath. As it is fire for severity, so it is unquenchable for duration, Mark 9:43, 45. There is no more recovery from it than there is for a man shut up in a red-hot oven. If it be reversible, it is only so by God; all the creatures in heaven and earth, in a joint combination, cannot blow away the fire that is not blown by man, as the expression is, Job 20:26. God hath declared himself to admit of no remission without blood, Heb. 9:22, what hopes, then, unless another redeemer can be provided to match Christ in as valuable a satisfaction, by the price of his blood? This hath already been accepted as sufficient by the Father, seconded by the Holy Ghost in his solicitations, as an advocate to men to accept it. But suppose it were possible to offer an infinite ransom to God for the recovery of our souls. How is God obliged to accept that, since that which he hath appointed and accepted hath been refused? There was no obligation upon him to appoint and accept the first, it was purely an act of grace; there can be as little or less upon him to accept a second. He might have exacted the sentence of the law, that the soul that sins shall die, and never have granted any to stand in the room of the sinner; and so he may still, if we consent not to what he hath approved. The sufferings of men for transgressions must be as bitter as the sufferings of Christ; the law requires it; but they must be more durable than his, in regard of our impotency for satisfaction. This impotency being eternal, the suffering must be of the same duration; and though Christ suffered for the transgressions against the first covenant, and the temporary transgressions against the new, yet he suffered not for final unbelief and impenitency. 'After death the judgment,' Heb. 9:27. The embracing the sacrifice of Christ is limited only to this life; no offers are made after death. 'The axe is laid to the root of the tree,' in the time of the gospel, Mat. 3:10. Patience under the law suffered the tree to stand, justice under the gospel brings the axe to the root, and what is not fit for the building is reserved for the fire. A tree cut off from the stock cannot be

fastened on again to grow; and it is not a wayfaring, but a 'dwelling with everlasting burning,' that every unbeliever is adjudged unto, Isa. 33:14. But suppose God should give a respite, and restore a man to life, and to hear the preaching of the gospel, what assurance is there that men would comply with the truths of God, if they had the habits of their old sins as strong in them as before? Is it not too frequent to break solemn vows, as easily as Samson snapped in pieces the cords that bound him; and that while they have been sensible of the gnawings of conscience? If men 'believe not Moses and the prophets,' nay, a greater than Moses and the prophets, they would not believe the report of one licensed to come from the place of torments; and as little believe, or quickly forget, their own feeling.

Use. First of information.

1. May we not see and admire the patience and goodness of God towards us? Doth the wrath of God abide upon every unbeliever; doth he lie under the iron mace of the law, ready to be crushed every moment, if God speaks the word; hath a sword, edged with the bitterest curses, hung over our heads by the brittle thread of a frail life? What if God had let the iron mace fall upon us and broken the thread, and made us possess the wrath that we had merited, not only by nature but by our infidelity? This patience would not have waited on us one moment had not that Christ we despised interposed himself for our reprieve, and presented the merit of his blood to stop the flood of divine fury. How have we been beholding to that God, whose grace we have abused, in bearing with us; and to Christ, whose bowels we have spurned, in soliciting for us while we were kicking at him? None of us but have been mightily beholden to God for his patience, and some no question for a pardon. How hath riches of goodness and forbearance waited upon us without any regret, to lead us to repentance, while we have stood it out in rebellion, Rom. 2:4. He did not reckon with us for our debts, and by his long-suffering stopped the vengeance that longed to seize us. Had not our natural corruption rendered us fit to be clapped up in his eternal prison, when we were in our cradles, and our perversity exposed us to a

greater punishment, when we have stood out in the maintaining of our forts against him? His threatenings continually pointed at us, yet are not put in execution upon us. It is not that we were not fuel fit enough for his wrath, it is not that he was ignorant of our crimes; for none but he, no, not our own consciences, knows what scores of talents we were indebted, and what demerit there was in every act of sin. Has he not arrested some who were less in his debt, put others' bonds in suit, and let ours lie by? Had he snatched away any present believer in his former state of infidelity, his condition had been eternally deplorable. Blessed be God for unwearied patience, that hath hitherto reprieved us; and blessed be God for overpowering grace, that hath secured any of us from that wrath which is due to infidelity!

2. May we not take notice of the extreme folly and madness of those that remain in a state of unbelief? It is folly in the judgment of our Saviour, for he couples 'fools, and slow of heart to believe,' in the rebuke he gives his disciples, who had already some principles of faith in them, though buried under the clods of some prejudicate opinions, Luke 24:25. So folly and disobedience, or unbelief (as the word is sometimes rendered), are put together: Tit. 3:3, 'Foolish and disobedient.' To follow any sin, upon which misery is entailed, is a senseless course; but to lie in this, which stakes us down to that misery, is as great a madness as it is a sin. As the loss of the soul is the most dreadful loss, so the neglect of the soul is the most unreasonable neglect. Men that will deliberate, and toss things of a worldly concern in their heads, will not employ time in the consideration of the things of another world; nay, will not so much as inquire into the corruptions of nature, or provisions of divine grace, and have their excuses ready framed to put back any invitation to the true path of their own happiness, as in Luke 14:18; as if they had entered a league, offensive and defensive, with the pleasures, profits, and lusts of the world against God.

(1.) Is this because any question the truth of the Christian religion, and think the maxims of it to be mere fables? which perhaps may be

in the secret of many hearts, though the way lies not plain for an outward expression. Are you sure it is not of a divine stamp? Suppose it were not, is it any prejudice to your happiness? You are exhorted by it to live virtuously. This is that which philosophers by the light of reason have prized and practised. No man dishonours God by receiving a doctrine, so far as it obligeth to such a carriage; is there anything in the whole scheme which makes to the dishonour of the deity? Doth a Trinity seem too mysterious? Some heathens did not think it incredible, since something of that nature hath been published by them, derived from those that had, mediately or immediately, conversed with the Scripture. Do we understand the nature of angels; yea, the nature of our own souls, and what the distinction of the faculties are? and shall we presume to deny a doctrine linked with so many others highly agreeable to the reasons of men, because it is above our reach, as the nature of God is infinitely more than the nature of angels? Or doth the death of the Son of God seem unreasonable? Is there anything in it disparaging the honour of God? Is not his faithfulness to his law, his love to his creature, the purity of his nature, and hatred of sin, mightily manifested hereby? Is it repugnant to reason that a divine person may voluntarily assume a body, be in a low condition for a time, in that nature which he assumed, that he may be happy in that nature for ever after? Or is it a thing altogether unknown among men, for one to answer for the faults of another, by an excess of friendship? But if those things which you will not believe prove to be true at last, that the Son of God hath suffered by God's appointment for the expiation of sin; that those that believe in him, and resign up themselves to his government, shall receive the benefits of it, and none else; what a madness will you then think yourselves guilty of! There is nothing in the whole frame of the Christian religion can make against your real happiness, supposing it were not true. But if it be true, the opinionative or practical slighting of it exposeth you to a most unexpressible misery. If the things revealed prove true, when it is too late to gather the blessed fruit of them, will a bottomless lake, a perpetual stinging conscience, be balanced by a few transitory pleasures on earth? Is it not an unreasonable folly to deny a doctrine

you cannot demonstrate to be false, and be in danger to feel a misery, that you cannot demonstrate but it may come upon you, rather than comply with those doctrines which cannot do you any prejudice in the great concerns of your souls, supposing they were not true? It is a folly utterly to deny them till you can demonstrate there is no such thing as a Redeemer, that the Scripture is not the word of God, that no such condition as faith is required of men. But let me ask the question, Is there nothing that troubles your consciences sometimes? Have you not some fears in your retirements? (if such men have any retired inspection into themselves) do you believe those fears springing up in your consciences to have any ground or no? If you think them groundless, why do you trouble yourselves with them without a cause? Why can you not expel them? If there be any just cause for them, and that they haunt you whether you will or no, why do you not look after a remedy? Would you not yourselves account that man mad, who, lying under a troublesome distemper, would inquire after no medicine?

(2.) Or is the reason of this neglect because you expect happiness from something else? No man in his right wits can build his felicity upon any earthly foundation; scarce any sort of rationalists ever did; in God was felicity placed by them. It is as great a folly to expect happiness from anything else, as to expect water from dry ashes, or a heap of gold from a burden of straw. And can any more rational method be framed to bring us to God, than what Christianity affords us But since we acknowledge the truth of the Christian religion, and the authority of the Scripture, can we propose any good to ourselves by neglecting the grace of God offered in it? Do you think Christ a Sun of righteousness? Do you acknowledge that he is the purchaser of blessedness, and God the fountain of it? Why, then, do any foolishly neglect the rejoicing in, and walking by that light, and drinking of those streams? Would you not laugh at that man that would turn his back upon the sun, to warm himself by a candle, as though there were more heat to be expected from that than from the other? Would you not stand astonished at one that should thrust away a rich wine from him, to drink of a miry puddle? What we

blame in others, we may charge ourselves with in spiritual things. To keep a distance from the fountain of life, is the way to continue in a perpetual death. How can we expect to benefit ourselves by anything, when we despise or neglect the only fountain wherein God hath placed salvation? What good can be proposed to ourselves by resting upon anything else, but the strengthening our fetters, gratifying our grand enemies, and binding over our souls to a perpetuity of wrath? Mercy will be displeased, God more provoked, and reigning sins strengthened to bring damnation.

(3.) Is it not a folly to neglect a necessary happiness which you may have? It is not only offered, but pressed; God importunes you, your consciences goad you on. It comes near to you, the divine mercy of the gospel encompasseth you round. Can there be a greater folly than to starve when we may have bread? to be willing to be shipwrecked in our bottom, rather than to pass into another vessel for a certain security? What do you think of Adam? Do you think him wise for preferring an apple before the delights of paradise? Let us put ourselves in the same rank, if we prefer a feather before a pearl, and endless misery before an happy immortality. No folly like that, to affect to be damned rather than be saved, when salvation may be procured, in some respect, upon easier terms for us than ever damnation can. Who can deserve a better character than that of a fool and madman, whose soul is not awakened to mind eternity by the sword of justice that glitters in his eye; but rather dares the sharp edge to do its worst, and this upon vile terms, to gratify some swinish affections? If our natural enmity to God, as governor of the world, hinders us from complying with his kindness, yet self-preservation should make us fear and endeavour to avoid his wrath; and no folly like that, to prefer our enmity to another before the security of ourselves. It is an unreasonable folly, and insensibleness, not to come up rally to the terms of that religion we expect salvation only by.

3. A believer must be infallibly happy, if an unbeliever be infallibly miserable. The same word that assures the deplorable state of the

one, assures the blessed estate of the other. The remission which was conditional in the declaration, is upon faith made absolute, because the condition is performed; what was proffered to all upon the condition of believing, If you believe, you shall have eternal life, is made absolute upon believing, You believe, therefore you have eternal life. If the faith of believers under the Old Testament were saving in that obscurity, our faith under a clearer light, and more certain manifestation, must be much more saving. Salvation is as much the issue of faith by God's order, as damnation is the issue of unbelief; it is called, therefore, a 'believing to the saving of the soul,' Heb. 10:39. It takes hold of the mercy-seat, and hath both the veracity of God, and the pleas of Christ, to defend it, and keep its hands from being knocked off.

(1.) Is not that man happy who hath an union with Christ; who is transplanted from Adam, the condemned head by law, into Christ, the justified head both by law and grace? Shall a member of Christ perish any more than the head? or can the head be happy without the members? Was his natural body only concerned in that prophecy, that not a bone of him shall be broken? or shall his mystical body fare worse than that? Can hell ever be the dwelling-place of that which is the habitation of Christ? Eph. 3:17. Shall wrath ever pierce into the intimate recesses where Christ resides? Shall the living waters which flow out of the belly, John 7:38. (which is nothing but the Spirit received by believing), stream anywhere but to the ocean of blessedness? The fatness sucked from the olive-tree, Rom. 11:17, is not to render any combustible matter for wrath, but a preparation for glory. Oneness with Christ renders a believer in a manner as safe as Christ's righteousness doth himself; how can a believer miss of happiness, since by his union with Christ he is united to God, who is infinite blessedness in his nature, and the only felicity of his creature?

(2.) Is not he infallibly happy, who hath everything removed that may render him eternally miserable? Justice is stopped from any inundation upon such a person, since he answers the terms

wherewith justice was satisfied. It would not longer retain the name of righteousness, if it acted so high a piece of unrighteousness as to deny its own agreement, and refuse the plea of that satisfaction it hath already accepted, and demand the debt Christ hath already paid. The tribunal of justice is to faith changed into a throne of grace, where justice and mercy sit both together, justifying and embracing a believer, Rom. 3:26, for such Christ hath fixed a rainbow about the throne of God (as was elsewhere observed), an emblem of peace, Rev. 4:3 to shew his mindfulness of the covenant when he comes to judge upon his throne. That whereby any son of Adam is condemned, is silent in regard of a believer. The law can no more plead its curses, against the blood of the Redeemer. Honey comes out of the belly of that lion instead of its fiery terrors, since Christ pronounced a freedom from guilt; for justification is at the instant of a sincere believing: John 3:18, 'He that believes on him is not condemned.' Is not, in the present tense. He is not in a state of condemnation, therefore in a state of justification. Sin also (which is the cornerstone and foundation of hell) hath received a deadly wound, and is every day more feebly gasping; for believers 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' and 'therefore there is no condemnation to them,' Rom. 8:1. The venom of his nature is cured, as well as the guilt contracted by sin; the biting of the old serpent infected the blood of mankind with a serpentine venom, so that every man may in some sort be said to be the seed of the serpent; but by faith the guilt is not only taken away, whereby we become obnoxious to God, but the venom of our nature, which corrupted the mass of blood.

(3.) Is not he infallibly happy, whose person and services are accepted by God? Eph. 1:6. If faith in Christ makes any an amiable object of God's love, it must certainly make him a prepared subject for God's glory. How can God make a person eternally miserable, with whom he is well pleased? As justice cannot but thunder against an obstinate rebel, so mercy cannot but embrace a penitent and believing supplicant, who brings a righteousness before God, that pleaseth him infinitely more than the whole world. He that stands unblameable before God, by the righteousness of his Son, cannot be

eternally miserable by his own sin. What tender father can condemn his own child? Such a relation doth faith make between God and the soul, by a double title, both of regeneration and adoption, John 1:12. Sonship is upon receiving of Christ, 'He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about,' Ps. 32:10. Mercy twines about every part of him.

(4.) Is not he infallibly happy, whom Christ, who is the Judge of the world, nether can nor will condemn? As he is not able, in regard to the unalterable method of God, to save an unbeliever, so he is not able, in regard of the same method, to condemn a believing person. The order of God is settled, and this is the rule of his proceeding; when he comes to judge, flaming vengeance is to be rendered to those 'that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thes. 1:8, neither of which characters a believer falls under. He is by covenant to justify men by the knowledge of himself, Isa. 53:11, or by faith in himself; will Christ violate the covenant of redemption so solemnly made? Would he proceed so far as to confirm it on his part by his death, to break it by his life? walk according to the articles of it when he was in the flesh, and defeat it when he was upon the throne? He cannot but be as willing to bestow mercy upon earth, now he is in heaven, as he was when he was upon the earth; and his language was then, 'Be it unto you according to your faith;' not only let that disease be removed, or that mercy granted, but intimating by that general grant the established order of his Father, that faith should not be denied the highest blessings that can be given.

(5.) Is not he infallibly happy whom God cannot condemn, neither in regard of his truth, nor in regard of the honour of Christ? Not in regard of his truth, since all the promises in the book of God belong to believers, because they are 'yea and amen' in Christ their head. God hath spoke it, and will never repent of what hath passed from his lips: Ps. 2:12, 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,' i.e. in his Son; and God wants no more a faithfulness to make good his word, than he wanted mercy to pass his word. His truth, which was

before on the side of justice, is now second to his grace, and stands as firm to make good the evangelical promise to him that performs the condition, as it is engaged to make good the legal and evangelical threaten id is upon them that want it. He puts the interest of men in the hands of Christ, 'that the promise might be sure to all the seed,' Rom. 4:16. Nor in regard of the honour of Christ: if God cannot save an unbeliever, who crosses the ends of Christ's death, without disparaging the undertaking of his Son, he cannot, according to his eternal order, destroy a believer, who answers the ends of it, without the same reflection. It would not be a just dealing with him in the rights of his purchase, to refuse the benefit of it to those that answer the conditions of enjoying it, and place the sheep that hear his voice in the same calamity with the dogs that snarl at him. Shall the blood of his Son be shed for the 'gathering together the sons of God,' John 11:52, and not sprinkled on them? God is more in love with the person of his Son, and more pleased with the blood of his Son, than to cast a dishonour upon the one or the other. The honour of God is as much concerned in saving every soul that bathes itself in the blood of the Redeemer, as in condemning every one that tramples upon it.

(6.) Is it possible that he should be miserable, who designs and endeavours to glorify God according to his own direction? How can we glorify God but by faith, since man by his fall had made himself unfit to glorify him any other way? This honours God more than Adam could, had he stood in innocency, who could never have returned God an higher honour of his perfections, than he could have gleaned and collected from the creature; whereas this owns him in his glorious manifestation in his Son, and returns him an acknowledgment of the more glorious expense of his grace, and fuller display of his excellency. He that trusts in Christ, is 'to the praise of the glory of God,' Eph. 1:12. Is it possible God should put that soul to the greatest misery, that endeavours to bring him the greatest glory? Faith kills the enmity in the heart towards God, and shall a God of infinite love, who inspired the believer with all the faith and love he hath, cherish enmity in his breast against one that lodgeth him in his dearest affections, and destroy his own production? Who can

imagine that a God of infinite goodness should be behind-hand with his creature in affections?

Well then, the salvation of a believer stands firm; hell and wrath shall not touch those that are anointed with the blood of Christ, and sheltered in so inviolable a sanctuary. Adam might sooner have been condemned in his innocent estate, than a Christian in a believing state, since God hath, besides a single word, laid upon himself great obligations by frequent repetitions of his promise by all the prophets, Acts 10:43, and besides hath confirmed it by the blood of his Son. Again, as the punishment of an unbelieving rebel is as unavoidable as the punishment of Christ, after he entered himself as an undertaker for us, so the salvation of a penitent believer is as certain as the acceptance of Christ, after he performed what as a surety he undertook for. He hath unlocked the gates of heaven, that were shut till the shedding of his blood. The angel's sword that guarded paradise, turns every way to let the believer in, as it turned every way before to keep a rebel out from the tree of life. The veil of the temple was rent in twain by the force of the cross, whereby there was a view of the holy of holies. A believer hath a prospect of heaven while he lives, and an entrance into it when he dies; it is 'through his name' if we believe in him, that 'we receive remission of sins,' Acts 10:43; he that hath remission cannot lie under damnation.

Use 4, is of exhortation. Be sensible of it.

1. Be sensible of the misery. Let every unbeliever consider that he hath the character of a condemned person upon him, for without faith Christ speaks no more comfort than the thunders of the law, but more terror than all the curses of that can speak. The text speaks it plain: 'He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him;' *pœna damni*, in the first, *pœna sensus*, in the second; there is a God of life, a heaven a place of life, but he shall never see the face of God with comfort, or enjoy the satisfactions of heaven. The deprivation of the heavenly Canaan, when a man comes to understand it, must much more affect the soul, than the deprivation of the earthly

Canaan affected Moses. How sad will it be to be hurled from a pinnacle of prosperity, to a dunghill of poverty in a moment! What do you think were the sentiments of Adam, when on the sudden he found himself fallen from a serene state into a sea of horrors? Such will be the thoughts of men, when they see themselves cast from heaven for want of faith, who before seemed to be in the suburbs of it by an external profession. Men are naturally now secure, and have rather a faith in their own hearts, than a faith in Christ, and cry Peace, in spite of God, who proclaims a curse: Deut. 29:19, 'Bless himself in his heart.' But with what rage will conscience at length lash and spring up a perpetual hell within them, that will condemn upon a deathbed, as God's viceroy, and God at last condemn as the supreme governor; that will ten thousand times more gnaw an unbeliever for his infidelity, than the worst heathen for all his other sins. The nearer a man is to happiness, the more afflicting is the loss of it, and the more tormenting when it is for a vile and an unlovely lust. How I am expelled from the presence of God, who lately had a door opened to it, by the blood of the Redeemer! Justice locked not the door of heaven upon me, till I turned my back upon it, and pulled it after me. That which might have made me as happy as an angel, I refused wilfully, to make myself as miserable as a devil. This will be the sad lamentation of a man obstinate under the preaching of the gospel. How great will the misery be, when justice shall plead the dishonour of God, and mercy charge thee with the abuses of his grace! When all the attributes of God shall pursue him, whom a little before they waited to receive; when Christ, who would have been a stone of building, shall be a stone of bruising, and shall crush by his wrath those that would not be wooed by his mercy; when he shall appear in the majesty of a judge, he will cut the hearts of those that despised him in the quality of a Saviour. Those that have been only under nature's light, without the least twinkling of the gospel, will be, in comparison of such, in a state of innocency, and under a more easy damnation. As Christ shed not his blood in vain, was not exalted in vain, pleads not in heaven in vain, so he is not entrusted with a power in vain; 'all power is given him in heaven and earth,' in pursuance of the gospel, upon which he founds the commission of

the apostles, and assures them of his assistance in their work, Mat. 28:18, 19, either for the happiness of the entertainers, or the misery of the neglecters; to break in pieces by his rod those that will not bow down to his sceptre: for in refusing ourselves the happiness of salvation, we refuse Christ the glory of his death and the honour of his authority. And consider, the more Christ is resisted, the deeper will the condemnation be. When we find Cain sinking under the load of the blood of an innocent person, murdered by him once, and see men whose hands have been imbrued in the blood of wicked wretches, to be in hell alive, when their consciences are awakened to a consideration of their guilt; what will it be then to be many a time, as by every act of infidelity, guilty of the blood of Christ? Nothing but woe can remain for that man, who hath the blood of Christ, so highly valued by God, pleading against him; it is greater than all the misery which can happen in this life. If we are sick, sickness is but a deprivation of health; if poor, the poverty is but the deprivation of wealth; but if unbelievers, we deprive ourselves of God, and of ourselves: the good we lose by it is a greater good than we can lose by any worldly misery. We offer the highest violence to ourselves, and reject the true felicity of our nature, by refusing an adherency to God as the chiefest good, and to Christ as the only way to the fruition of him. Faith only kept David's heart from fainting, Ps. 27:13. Unbelief, then, can be no cordial for any in a dying hour; since by refusing a Saviour he makes himself utterly incapable of salvation.

2. Be sensible of the equity and justice of this misery. We can never be affected with any pronounced woes, unless we first judge God just; and truly the punishment is as deeply merited at the hands of God, as his kindness in his Son was undeserved by us. If justice might equitably punish men for breaking the laws of the Creator, it might much more punish them for slighting the overtures of an appeasable Creator, and the performances of an appeasing Redeemer; and what is more reasonable than to have that inflicted upon men, which was inflicted upon the Saviour they make so light of!

(1.) There is no want on Christ's part. There hath been by him satisfaction enough for the payment of our debts, and merit enough for our restoration to our happiness. He hath done all things necessary for the salvation of the world: he hath expiated sin, which plunged it into misery; he hath presented his death to God as a sacrifice of infinite value, sufficient for all the world, and by opening the throne of grace, hath given liberty to approach to God, and solicit him for the application of the benefit he hath purchased; he hath also purchased the Spirit, sent him into the world to renew his solicitations to men, who seriously calls them to the partaking of this salvation, and declares it to be a thing very agreeable to him, that men should come in to him. He came not intentionally to condemn any man: John 3:13, 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;' to proclaim the riches of the grace of God for the salvation of men.* But in regard of the event, indeed he is their judge, to which men provoke him by their obstinacy; whence it is said, John 9:39, that he came 'to judge the world,' i.e. in regard of the event. As the intention of a physician in prescribing sovereign medicines for the mastering the disease is to heal the patient; but if the patient neglects those restoratives, and swallows poison in their stead, this is not the physician's, but the patient's fault. The title of our Lord Jesus in his first coming was Saviour, not Judge; he presented men with that which might warrant them from condemnation; but if they will not rejoice in their happiness, they exclude themselves from the benefit; and by not embracing the ransom God hath provided, they expose themselves to pay that satisfaction in their persons which the law exacts. The satisfaction of Christ they cannot plead, because the conditions of it are not embraced; they must therefore pay what the law demands, which would else be insignificant, and the honour of God's justice would suffer in their safety. When, therefore, every offer of mercy shall accompany men to the tribunal of the judge, and this charge be heard from his mouth:* I have redeemed you by my blood, and you have trod it under foot; I have invited you to faith and repentance, but you would rather wallow in the excrements of sin; I have called you by the motions of my Spirit, and you have proved

rebellious; I have encouraged you by promises of great reward, but you made no account of them; wherein have I been wanting? With what face can any man now lay the fault upon God? As when a king proclaims pardon to a rebellious city, upon the condition that they yield up themselves to his son; as it is equity that those that surrender themselves should have the promised benefit, so it is just that those that wilfully resist so easy and reasonable a condition, should fall under the threatened penalty; they have no reason to charge their ruin upon any want of clemency in the king, since the proffer was made to all, but upon their own obstinacy, because they perish by their own folly.

(2.) No want of evidence and declaration of the salvation purchased. If there were not sufficient arguments to work upon men's understandings, nor persuasive motives to induce their wills to embrace it; if there were not a demonstration of an invincible necessity of their belief, their condemnation for infidelity would not appear to be just. But there is sufficient evidence; 'light is come into the world,' and hath exposed to the view of men the treasures of grace and glory, the most alluring motives to prevail upon their wills; but their affections carry them to error and darkness, upon which the Scripture lays the cause of men's condemnation, John 3:19, and calls it a self-judgment: Acts 13:46, 'You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.' Ignorance sometimes excuseth, † either when the things we are ignorant of we are not bound to know, as what is the just magnitude of the sun; or when they are not sufficiently revealed, as who Melchisedec was; but when that which concerns our clear duty, and choicest happiness, is with a full evidence of truth set clearly before our eyes, is it not our own fault if we regard them not? Such an ignorance is affected and voluntary, and leaves a man in judgment without excuse; and is so far from diminishing the fault, that it rather aggravates it. Why are any ignorant, when the doctrines of the gospel have been represented to them, and it was their undeniable duty to know and receive them? If the sun shines upon the world, and discovers the treasures of the creation; if men will

shut their eyes, and will not behold them, is that the fault of the sun, or of the men?

(3.) It is a voluntary and wilful refusal, and therefore a consent to the punishment. Unbelievers are excluded from heaven, and locked up in misery by their own consent; not formal and explicit, but virtual and implicit. They voluntarily neglect the performance of those conditions upon which a right to heaven is founded, and willingly continue in that state which subjects them to eternal misery. Whosoever refuseth the conditions, refuseth by that act the privileges which depend upon those conditions. He that will not pay a pepper-corn per annum for an estate of a considerable value, when it is all the rent demanded, wilfully deprives himself of the right of tenancy. He that will not sue out the pardon of his crimes upon easy conditions enjoined him, deprives himself of the benefit of the prince's proclamation, and justly perisheth, because, as the conditions are the fruits of the greatest mercy in the prince, so the refusal is a demonstration of the greatest hatred in the rebel. Those that choose to gratify Satan in his triumphs over them, rather than please Christ who hath bled for them, perish by their own wilfulness. The Scripture chargeth it upon this score: Christ would gather men, but 'they will not,' Mat. 23:37, 38; God doth not destroy Israel, but Israel 'destroys himself,' Hos. 13:9. The Holy Ghost, in the close of the canon of the Scripture, lays it there: Rev. 22:17, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely.' If any man will, he may have it; if he hath it not, it is because he doth not will it; and he that doth not will it, doth consequently will the waters of death; and what is more reasonable, than that those who will not accept of a tendered salvation should not enjoy it? The whole design of Scripture is to publish God's willingness to impart the fruits of the death of Christ, and upon the close the Holy Ghost puts the question, whether they will partake of them or no. As much as to say, God hath discharged himself; let men look to it, they will be found at last the wilful cause of their own ruin.

Obj. But we have no strength of our own to will; God only gives faith.

Ans. God may urge us to believe; we are bound to be obedient to whatsoever is his declared will, as a rule for our obedience. He gave Adam strength to believe whatsoever he revealed; he is no more bound to repair that strength (but where he pleases) than he was bound to send Christ to redeem, after man by his revolt had plunged himself in misery. He may require of man the honour due to him, and is bound to bestow no more upon man than man can challenge as his due. It is true, when God would create a rational creature, the holiness of his nature doth oblige him to create him holy; but his holiness doth not oblige him to repair man, who hath forfeited all to justice, and had his blessings seized into the hands of his offended Lord. God is not therefore bound to turn every man's, or any man's will. Yet the refusal of God's gracious tenders is in every unbeliever wilful, because he makes not use of that strength which was left in him, after the fall, by the mediation of Christ. There is indeed an utter impotency in man as fallen; you find no footstep of one good thought, one good inclination, in Adam after his fall; he had no mind to approach to God to implore his mercy. Instead of confessing his sin, he palliates it, Gen. 3:9–12. Conscience forceth him to acknowledge it; not to charge himself humbly, but to discharge himself upon God; he mentions not the name of God with any respect in all that discourse. Thus man considered in Adam, purely as fallen, hath not one thought morally good; so that the apostle might well say, that 'we are insufficient of ourselves to think a good thought,' 2 Cor. 3:5. But there is some restored power by the interposition of Christ, as he is 'the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John 1:9; whereby he may have some thoughts and inclinations materially good, if he will follow the conduct of that common light; he hath a faculty to think of what God reveals; he hath sometimes some kind of velleities, but he doth not improve and pursue them. He puts by those things when they are represented to him by the Spirit of God; he cannot endure to have his thoughts dwell upon them, and is unwilling to direct his affections and inclinations to a divine object. The corrupt habits in his will wholly sway him another way. If a man were willing, and God unwilling; if he did seriously seek God, and call upon him (as he

might direct his cries to God, as well as to creatures), and God had said, he would give him no share in Christ, then man had reason to complain. But it may be truly said, that no man at the day of judgment can, with a full witness of conscience, say, Lord, I have sought thee to the utmost of that power thou didst vouchsafe to me after the fall. I would have believed in Christ; I prayed for faith with strong cries and tears; many a time I went to ordinances with a desire and hopes to have it bestowed upon me; I have waited at thy gates for the moving of the Spirit upon the waters of my soul; I have grieved that I have not been seized by him, and thou wouldst not bestow faith upon me: can we think any man can say so at the last day? Without question, no unbeliever can have that plea; his own conscience will fall in with the judge, and charge his unbelief upon a would not.

(4.) This voluntary refusal is out of affection to some unworthy lust. And this reason clears the equity of God's justice in their punishment. If Tories and robbers will not accept of a pardon, because they would live idly by their rapine, and pilfering their neighbours, rather than content themselves with some honest employment, they increase by such a carriage the equity of that justice which shall be armed against them. This is the case, John 3:19, 'men love darkness;' they will not believe, because they will not be hindered from breaking the divine law without any regret. No question but many would receive the gospel for the benefit of remission which it offers, but not for the mortification of the old man with its lusts, which it enjoins. A true believer rejoiceth in the benefit of pardon by the gospel, and tastes the sweetness of that doctrine, but embraceth it as well for the renewing grace of it, for the unloosing his chains, changing his spiritual death into a spiritual life, and an heart imprinted by sin into an heart engraven with a new law; for he embraceth Christ for the main ends of his death, which were a restoration of the holiness as well as the happiness of nature; to 'purify a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works,' as well as to 'redeem them from all iniquity,' Titus 2:14. The unbeliever is quite contrary, and neglects a Saviour because he would retain his sin; he

would be willing to have Christ for a pardon, but without a yoke. But doth not such a frame put an end to all disputes against the equity of God's justice? Is it just that he that will not have a restoration of God's image should have a restoration to the felicity of paradise, to live for ever with the original? Or that he should be exempted from the misery due to his sin, who would retain his violent inclinations against the honour of God, and practically declare he would rather lose all the fruits of the blood of God than the pleasures of sin? And will not the consciences of many men charge them with this at the last day, and force them to say, Lord, I had some apprehensions of the truth of thy word, and the necessity of Christ, yet I was loath to forsake a beloved Delilah for them. I was willing to believe in him for salvation, but not to conform to him in obedience; fleshly and spiritual lusts engrossed my will, which should have been inclined to thee.

(5.) The dignity and peculiar design of the person proposed clears the justice of the punishment. The Son of God, and his design peculiar for man. If a prince should take a great journey to deliver a galley-slave from his fetters, and he refuse acceptance, would not all men judge him worthy of the chains he loves? Or if a king should go a thousand miles in much hardship to court a nasty beggar, and receive a refusal, would not all men count her worthy of perpetual rags and sordidness? The case is the same here. The design of Christ was peculiar for man: devils are excluded. A reward was promised him: pardon and justification was promised as a reward to him, which he, being innocent in his own person, was not capable of, and therefore was peculiarly intended as a gift to man.

Let every man, then, in an unbelieving state, be sensible of the equity of this misery he exposeth himself unto. Be sensible that Christ hath not been wanting; that there is sufficient revelation of the will and kindness of God, that your refusal of him is voluntary and wilful, and with the greatest indignity, undervaluing him by low and base affections, and such a person who is of infinite dignity, and intended his kindness peculiar for man; and therefore he that will wilfully

refuse so rich a sacrifice of God's provision for the satisfaction of his own justice, cannot but acknowledge it reasonable to be made a sacrifice himself to that justice he hath offended. An eternal misery is merited by him who rejects a God of infinite goodness, a Christ of infinite value, and an heaven of infinite duration.

3. Let your sense of unbelief rise up to a detestation of it, and a labouring after faith. Why should God be kept out of the exercise of his sovereignty, and Christ hindered from the rights of his purchase? Why should not the Redeemer have the things that belong to him, since he hath 'bought us with a price'? 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Put not off the seasons of grace. Let us not harden our hearts against the offers of mercy, lest we come short of the promise, as they did to whom the gospel was preached in types, because they mixed not the word with faith; they looked upon the typical part, and looked not beyond it to the thing signified, Heb. 4:1, 2. If they entered not into rest because they believed not a gospel in types, how shall we be admitted into rest, if we believe not a gospel in substance, stripped of the obscuring shadows? As there was no remission unless Christ had shed his blood, so there is no participation of that blood without applying it by faith. It is to this the Spirit presseth us: it is a pity to resist so comfortable a solicitor. Can we behold a Saviour bleeding upon the cross for our security, and not give him the small honour of the faith he requires? Christ as crucified doth not save us, but Christ as believed on. Though the fire hath a warming property, yet we must approach to it if we will partake of its heat. Though a medicine hath an healing virtue, yet it is not healing as it is in the glass, but as received in the stomach. We partake not of Adam's contagion but by natural generation; we partake not of Christ's holiness but by spiritual regeneration, the form whereof is faith. Without faith we continue under the power of Satan. There are but two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of Christ, Col. 1:13. Unbelief subjects us to the one, and faith estates us in the other. If faith quencheth the fiery darts of Satan, Eph. 6:16, unbelief exposeth us as a mark to every arrow. The longer any man continues in unbelief, the more unfit will he be for faith. The natural hardness will grow into

judicial, and the stone we bring with us into the world more rocky, more insensible of the strokes of the law, or the balsam of the gospel. As walking unworthy of the light of nature provokes God to give men up to a sensual brutishness, Rom. 1:21, so opposing the light of the gospel provokes God to give men up to a spiritual devilishness. The more spiritual the discovery of grace, the more spiritual are the judgments upon neglect. No duties are acceptable without faith. It is as impossible to please God by the humblest devotions without faith, as it is to get to heaven by the most soaring righteousness without Christ. God smiles upon nothing unless offered to him in the name of his Son, Col. 3:17; and who can offer anything in his name that hath not faith in his blood? Without Christ we can do nothing, John 15:5; without union to him, which is only caused by faith, whole heaps of sacrifices are cyphers, and amount to just nothing. God did not enjoin Adam prayer, confession of sin, and sacrifices at the first meeting after the fall, till he had uttered the promise of a Mediator as the object of faith, whence all those other duties were to flow, which were natural to him in a state of innocence, or instituted with a particular respect to the Mediator, and present state of Adam. Faith was to be the ground of his obedience; for, having by his apostasy rendered himself unable to obey any, he must first believe, that he might have a new strength, and a new principle of obedience to other commands; which evidenceth the vanity of those men that depend upon a self-righteousness, and a formal set of duties, without regarding the Mediator of God's appointing. No duty acceptable without faith. Faith rendered Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's, and made it accepted, while unbelief rendered the other fruitless. Miseries attend this state in this life, which prepare for the miseries of a future. Let us, therefore, embrace the grace of the golden sceptre, lest we be crushed by the weight of the iron rod, and kiss the Son, lest we feel his wrath. 'He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

A DISCOURSE SHEWING WHO ARE UNBELIEVERS

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.—JOHN 6:64.

AFTER Christ had discoursed of the necessity and advantages of faith in him, whereby a right to eternal life is acquired, ver. 47, he declares himself to be the bread of life, more excellent than the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness, which was not able to secure them from the invasion of death.* But 'this,' saith he, 'is the bread which came down from heaven,' ver. 50, as if he had pointed to his own body in the speaking those words; and not only the 'living bread,' that have life in myself, but the enlivening bread, 'which came down from heaven to give life' to the sons of men, ver. 51, and this bread is 'my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;' when this flesh shall suffer and become a sacrifice to God, if it be eaten by faith, it shall be capable to communicate life to as many as do so. But the Jews who heard him, had carnal conceptions of this discourse of our Saviour, and raised matter of scandal from that which should have been a ground of their faith: ver. 52, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' How can the eating the flesh of a man be a thing agreeable to God, and an efficacious means to gain eternal life? Christ then perceiving their hardness, and ignorance, and their misinterpretations of his speech, understanding that of an oral eating which they might by his former discourse have understood figuratively of believing in him, he doth more positively assert what he had spoken before, and that by a strong asseveration, which some think to be in the nature of an oath among the Jews: ver. 53, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.' It is an undoubted truth, that I am only able to give you life; and besides, if you believe not in me, it is impossible that ever you should have any life in you; but if

you do believe, eat my flesh and drink my blood, by, or in believing, whosoever he be, of what quality and condition soever, he 'shall have eternal life; and to this end, that he may completely enjoy it, 'I will raise him up at the last day' from the dead; for whatsoever your fathers did before eat or drink, manna, and the water from the rock, was neither meat nor drink indeed, but types of me, of my flesh and blood, which is the true meat, and the true drink to enliven you, and preserve you in life; and, you know, the food you eat, and the drink you drink, are united to your bodies, so as to become a part of yourselves, yet not so perfectly but there is a decay again, so that there remains nothing of that nourishment you have took before, but other must succeed in the room to keep up your bodies in good plight; but the meat and drink which I give are of another kind, for they are the cause of an inseparable union, and inviolable communion: ver. 56, 'He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him.' Natural food, not remaining always in the body, doth not preserve without fresh meals; but this meat continues in its force and vigour perpetually, uniting the soul to me, and me to it. The source of this life is in the Father, who hath communicated a power to me, to enliven those that have communion with me; so that if any one believe in me, he shall live by me, because the spring of life in the Father is communicated to me as the Head, and by me conveyed to all those that are members of me by faith. We are united by faith to Christ, and therefore not united to him as God, or as God-man, but as God-man crucified and risen again for us, ver. 56. And though you have a great opinion of the manna God sent down to your fathers, and it was indeed a great miracle, and mercy, and a confirmation of the ministry of Moses, yet you can take no great pleasure in that, since those to whom it was particularly communicated were not preserved from death, and did not live for ever, which this bread I spake to you of will certainly effect in you, ver. 57. 'These things,' saith the evangelist, 'he spake in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum,' ver. 59, publicly, and in the midst of his enemies, declaring thereby his power, that he knew, when he pleased, how to repress the violence of his adversaries, and restrain their fury from breaking out against him, ver. 60. Now, after

Christ had spoken these things, the multitude were so far from being satisfied, that even some of his disciples, who had before heard him in other discourses with much contentment, are offended at this as a strange discourse. They could not conceive how the flesh of Christ could be eaten, and his blood drank,* since the law forbade them to drink the blood of any creature; nor how his body, if sliced into many pieces, could satisfy so great a multitude that were desirous of eternal life; nor could any conceive that his body was better than manna, whereof the Scripture speaks so highly; and which way soever their reasons turned, they could not conceive the meaning of Christ's words, and therefore said, 'This is a hard saying;' † it is incredible, no sober ear can endure such discourses as these, or yield any assent thereunto. And though, out of some veneration of Christ, they did speak this publicly, and enter into a dispute with him about this argument, yet Christ, who knew the motions of their hearts, and what thoughts they had of his discourse, obviates this offence, remitting them to his resurrection and glorification: ver. 62, 'What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' and asserting his own deity. The import of it is this, ‡ Have you such carnal conceits of my discourse, as to understand the eating my flesh, and drinking my blood, of an oral eating? When you shall see that this flesh shall ascend to heaven, you will see your error, and find it impossible to chew my flesh with your teeth; and then you will understand, that that which you conceive was not my meaning, but that it is to be meant of a spiritual eating and drinking, i.e. in believing; and therefore be not troubled at this distance of my body from you at that time, for if you believe, I shall still make good my word and promise of life to you, for it is the Spirit whom I shall send after my ascension into heaven, who shall communicate this life to you, by sanctifying and purging you: ver. 63, 'It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.' Should you eat my flesh in that manner which you weakly imagine, it would profit you nothing, neither for the comfort of your souls, nor resurrection of your bodies; you therefore very much abuse me, and abuse yourselves, to put such a construction upon my words, for 'the words I speak are spirit and

life'; they are spiritual, and ought to be understood spiritually, and he that receiveth them in a spiritual manner, will find them to be the means of life, and assurance of life to him, and a continual seed and principle of eternal life in him. But it is to little purpose that I should thus comment upon and explain what I have said, since 'there are some of you that do not believe,' and will not believe in whatsoever manner the doctrine of the gospel should be proposed to you, ver. 64. Upon which the evangelist adds a remark and observation of his own concerning the deity of Christ, that being his principal scope in writing this Gospel, which appears to be his purpose in the beginning of his discourse, chap. 1, and therefore he records those speeches of Christ, wherein his deity is plainly asserted or implied; and upon several occasions in the whole book, points us to those things which may manifest the truth of it, whereof this is one.

Observe,

1. How blind is man naturally in the things of God! How hard is it for us to understand spiritual truths, not by reason of their obscurity, but our own corruption, wherewith the eyes of our minds are blinded, and our understandings darkened! Had an heathen understood the discourse of Christ in this manner, he had been more excusable than those Jews that were taught from heaven, had the Messiah been wrapt up in their types, might have learned something of him by the paschal lamb, the ceremonies whereof might have informed them of this doctrine. The lamb signified Christ, the killing it signified the death of Christ, the eating of it signified faith in his blood, and thereby a participation of him, and conjunction with him; but they being bewitched with an opinion of a worldly grandeur, neither regarded the type of him in the lamb, nor the discourses he frequently made to them. How few of the Jews understood the meaning of the types of the Messiah; nay, how little can we give a full account of the analogy between the type and the antitype, since they have both met together!

2. How apt are we to have carnal imaginations of spiritual things, and look upon the word of God with false optics! What reason had those people to imagine that our Saviour, whom they saw without spot, whose actions manifested his tenderness and kindness, who was an exact observer of the law, should preach a necessity of their being cannibals and man-eaters, and propose to them the drinking the blood of a man, when the blood of any creature was forbidden in the law to be swallowed by them, and which none but the most barbarous nations have ever practised! What need of prayer and importunity for the Spirit, and diligent inquiry, to make us have right notions of the words of God! The Spirit quickens, the light of the Spirit is only efficacious to give us an understanding of the gospel.

3. The deity of Christ is here asserted; thrice in the space of four verses: ver. 61, 'Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it.' He never heard their voice, nor was informed by the report of others; he knew it by the divine nature communicating that knowledge to his humanity: 'He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man,' John 2:25. He did not only know that the Jews, which were his enemies, were offended, but that his disciples murmured at it; he knew the motions of the hearts of his open enemies, and his unbelieving followers; not the heart of any in the multitude was locked up from his notice; he knew it in and by himself, not by another. And ver. 62, 'The Son of man ascends up where he was before;' he was in heaven before his incarnation, he therefore had an existence before his incarnation; he ascended into heaven in his humanity, where he was before in his divinity. Christ God-man is one person; the Son of God and the Son of man is one Christ,* in regard of the unity of the persons; he tells us, while he spake on earth, he is in heaven, John 3:13, the Son of God on earth in susceptâ carne, the Son of man in heaven in unitate personæ; he was in the earth, yet in heaven at the same time. If he were a creature, it were not possible that he could be in two places at one and the same time. Every creature hath a limited essence, and a limited place, he cannot be in it and out of it at the same time. If he be on earth and in heaven at the same time, it is certain that he is God, of an infinite

essence, and by consequence eternal;† since the reason of time is the same with that of place, an infinite nature can no more be bounded by time, than it can be limited by place. If he were before in heaven, it could not be in his flesh that he took of the virgin, he could not be existent in flesh before he had flesh; he had no flesh but from the virgin, for he was 'made of a woman,' Gal. 4:4. It must be then in another nature, wherein he was existent in heaven before he was incarnate on earth. There is no other nature but the divine, angelical, and human: angelical nature he had not, that nature he took not, therefore was not of it, Heb. 2:16; the human nature he assumed at the time of the standing of the Jewish temple. It must be by the divine nature then wherein he was in heaven before. A third testimony there is in the text, 'for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.' From the beginning, i.e. ab æterno, saith Ferus. He did so, indeed, as God; or from the beginning, i.e. ab initio conversationis discipulorum: Luke 1:2, 'As they delivered them to us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses,' so Brugensis, from the beginning of any one's following him; his divine nature communicated to his humanity their sentiments and secret opinions of him. The knowledge of thoughts is a perfection peculiar to the Deity; man may conjecture, God only knows them. He knew also who should betray him, when Judas had not then the least thought of such an action, or any intention to it;‡ nor doth it appear that he had that design, till the high priests had discovered their resolution for his death; yet Christ knew before that he should do it, before Judas knew that he would do it, as he knew Peter's denial of him before ever Peter thought of such a thing, and predicted it to Peter, when Peter was resolved against it; when Christ foretold it to him, then it was, 'I will not deny thee, though I should die with thee,' Mat. 26:35. But afterwards, his speech, 'I know not the man,' verified the certainty of Christ's foreknowledge.

There are some of you that believe not. He brings upon the stage the true reason of that offence they had taken at his words. He charges not their ignorance, but their unbelief. He doth not say, there are

some of you that understand not, but he dives into the cause of their dulness, they did not believe. The fountain of the wrong notions men have of the word, is their want of faith. And this he speaks to his disciples; many of them murmured at him for this discourse: ver. 60, 'many of his disciples.' They might join themselves to Christ upon many motives, either because of the greatness of his miracles, expectation of preferment from him in his temporal kingdom they looked for, out of the desire of novelty, a natural curiosity, perhaps from a weariness of the legal discipline, or for gain, as Judas did. Some kind of faith or profession they had, for they were disciples. But when the unbelief is greater than the assent, such a faith is esteemed as nothing;* it is a faith that will be easily laid aside upon a small occasion, and another profession taken up in the room of it, as they did, ver. 66, 'many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him;' and though they did follow him for a time, yet all that time of their following him, they had the principle of apostasy in their unbelief, though it broke not out into act.

The observation that I shall handle, lies plain in the words.

Doctrine. Many under the preaching of the word, and that seem to be professors, are real unbelievers. There may be a professed assent, when there is not a firm one, or at least a full consent; a painted faith, without any sound persuasion of the truth of those things in the heart. Many stand idle in the market, and gaze upon the commodities Christ sets to sale, but open not their hearts to receive the treasures that are opened to them. That prophecy concerning the miserable reception he hath in the world, is of a standing and lasting truth to this day, that 'there is no beauty in him that we should desire him,' that the faces of men are hid from him, that he is despised and not esteemed, Isa. 53:2, 3. It was verified in our Saviour's time, John 12:37, 38, and is not ended in ours. There is a secret unbelief in the hearts of men, which is not expressed with their tongues, but writ in their actions: Luke 7:30, 'They rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' Calvin takes εἰς for ἐν, in themselves; there was not an open declamation against John's baptism, but a secret dislike of it by

an inward pride swelling up in their minds. There are not only many dead stakes in the hedge, but some flowers upon the hedge, which are not part of the garden, or transplanted into it, as their proper soil. Those that have the deepest engagements to God, are often the greatest rejecters of Christ. There was not a nation which owned in their worship the unity of God, but the Jews. No nation expected and longed for the redemption by the Messiah but they. No nation had the promises of him but they; they had more particular obligations to Christ than any: they were his own, John 1:11, they were conducted by him through the wilderness, were entrusted with his oracles, heard his word, all other nations were in regard of them none of Christ's. The whole world indeed belonged to him by the right of creation and government; but in regard they had not such particular obligations to him as the Jews, they are not here called his own. Yet those that longed for him, wished for his coming, instead of receiving him, with the greatest welcome, rejected him with the greatest spite; as though he that came to redeem them, and perfect the kindness shewn to them in the first administration of the covenant with them, had designed nothing but their ruin. And so now Christ is more contemptible among his own than among strangers; he is not so much wronged and slighted among heathens that have not known him, as among those to whom the gospel is preached.

I shall shew,

I. That it is so.

II. Who are they that are unbelievers.

III. The causes of this unbelief.

IV. The use.

I. That it is so. In this I shall consider unbelief in general; not only as it is a non-acceptance of Christ, or a refusal of him, but as it is a denying credit to any revelation of God; and therefore when it is generally granted that God doth make revelations of his will, and it

was a notion owned by men naturally, and that men do not naturally comply fully with such revelations as from God, it is no wonder that men are so often found to be guilty of the refusals of Christ, since there is nothing in nature that can make any discovery of him, or assist our belief in him, the whole stream of nature being against it; yet whenever the Scripture speaks of unbelief, it intends this resistance of Christ in his person, or shadows representing him, or promises concerning him. But that many or multitudes under the word and common profession of Christianity are unbelievers is evident, because,

1. The Scripture always accounts the faithful but few. The Scripture mentions but two of Adam's race at one time, and one of them Cain, an unbeliever, and the head of the unbelieving world after; and in nine generations from Seth, the world was so corrupted, and God's Spirit so striven against by that generation, that he pronounceth of it that 'all flesh had corrupted their ways,' Gen. 6:3, 12, and only Noah was found with whom he would establish his covenant, viz. that he should enter into the ark, and rely upon God in a way of faith and obedience, which was a type of the eternal security men have in Christ, the true ark. That covenant made with Adam in the promise of the seed of the woman, was rejected by the whole world, and there was none in the earth that owned it, and with whom God would establish it, but Noah. This was the covenant of grace under the shadow of the ark, as the sun under a cloud. It was for their unbelief in the Mediator that the old world was condemned to perish in the waters. For the great work of the Spirit of Christ, by which he preached to them in those days, 1 Peter 3:18, 19, is against this sin. Christ hath not only suffered by the unbelief of men in these last times, but from the beginning. So that if his divinity had been as capable of suffering as his humanity, he had suffered by the violence of men in former ages, as well as in the latter; for the old world spared him not, but provoked him by their incredulity of his promise. Of six hundred thousand Israelites, there are but two expressly mentioned that believed in Christ, shadowed under the promise of entering into Canaan. It was their unbelief in Christ made them

uncapable of entering into rest, Heb. 3:19, for the apostle discourseth there against unbelief in Christ, and brings the misery which fell upon their ancestors as a motive against it. A remnant only in the time of Ahab, in that populous nation; about seven thousand among a great multitude; for the ten tribes could not well be fewer than Judah and Benjamin, who were in one army one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, 1 Kings 12:21. And in the apostle's time the case was much the same, for which he cites this passage out of the Kings: Rom. 11:4, 5, 'There is a remnant according to the election of grace,' λεῖμμα, a small piece out of a whole cloth. Christ is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, even to the house of Judah and Israel, the only church God had in the world, Isa. 8:14, and believers so rare among them that they were as wonders and prodigies, which are not often seen, ver. 18. In the days of his flesh few believed in him. John Baptist affirms that 'no man receives his testimony,' John 3:32; no man comparatively to those that refused him, the number of believers being as a few grains of a commodity scattered out of a scale. A few of the common people believed in him, and but one Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea of the higher sort. But the generality of the Jews, to whom both the promise and offer of the Messiah were made, are charged with unwillingness to come under his wing, Mat. 23:37; with foolish excuses to absent themselves from his feast, Luke 14:18; with a resolute resistance against his call, Mat. 22:3; and some that were very forward, and in general seemed to accept of all his terms, and to be content to do whatsoever he required, when it came to the push, did strike off and went away grieved, as the young man, Mark 10:17, 21. Judas professed and preached him, and had not a mite of faith in him; and some at the last shall plead their prophesying in his name, casting out devils, and doing many wondrous works in his name, who were never united to him by faith, nor shall ever reign with him in glory, Mat. 7:22, 23. And when he comes at last, though there may be a lair harvest of professors, there will be a famine of faith, Luke 18:8.

2. Unbelief is natural to man, and therefore it is no wonder that many under the preaching of the gospel, and that seem to be

professors, are unbelievers.

(1.) There is an enmity in nature to the grace of faith in Christ. Since in a state of nature men are in constant arms against God, they have no natural inclination to give credit to any revelation of God. Men do not usually believe their enemies, or trust them without a caution. Since we first left God, it is natural to us in all straits to have recourse to sensible objects; and because we once left him, we are loath to return to him, because our natural pride refuseth to charge ourselves with the folly of our first revolt. Man despiseth Christ: Isa. 49:7, 'Thus saith the Lord to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhors.' Man in his fallen estate would have a bottom of his own to stand upon; he is abhorred by the nation, i.e. by the nation of the Jews, called the nation as being more peculiarly under God's conduct, the nation to whom he was peculiarly sent; and therefore when Christ came, it is said there was no man, none to answer his call, Isa. 50:2, no man naturally. And this is not so much from a dulness of understanding as a natural disaffection. Since man can understand things that are abstruse, and with a liveliness search into those things which are pleasant to his nature, and easily believe them; his not believing the mysteries revealed by God is from the reluctancy of his nature against him, and unwillingness to acquaint himself with those things which may over-rule his sensuality and natural inclinations to pleasure. A man may sooner suffer for a truth of Christ than believe, because there may be many motives in corrupt nature to persuade a man to suffer for an opinion, as a repute of constancy, courage, an affectation of a fame (such a vanity as acted that person that burnt Diana's temple, that he might not be forgot in the world); yea, a man may in distrustfulness of God's providence be weary of his life, and be desirous in some creditable way to be stripped of it; but faith finds no assistance in nature. Pride can be no encouragement to it, as to suffering. It is a grace which wholly empties a man of himself, lays him in the dust, suffers not any ambition of a righteousness of his own, strips him of all his own excellency. Since pride is a man's darling in nature, everything that lays it low is abhorred by nature. There is as great an opposition

between the heart of man and the mysteries of God, as there is between fire and water. Our resistance of the Spirit is natural, the Holy Ghost never overcomes without striving, Gen. 6:3. The principle of the flesh opposeth that of the Spirit in a good man, much more in an unrenewed heart; nay, there is an enmity in the heart against the truth of Christ, because it is truth: John 8:45, 'Because I tell you the truth, you believe me not.'* Not that men think that they hate the truth when they reject Christ, but they are led by an instinct of the devil, who is their father, and the father of lies, against the truth, as there is something in it that doth not please their natural affections. As those that are prone to contention cannot endure the counsels of peace, because they are the counsels of peace; and those that are given to drunkenness cannot endure admonitions to sobriety, because they tend to sobriety; so when men love lies by nature, and the power of the devil their father, they hate anything that tends to divine truth.

(2.) The attendants on faith are against the grain of nature; unbelief, therefore, and the attendants on it, are suitable to nature. No man is naturally willing to part with a dear member, a right eye, mortify carnal affections, deny his dearest self; nay, men are hardly brought to consider the things of faith, examine themselves about the nature of faith; they are drawn to the touchstone as hardly as a man to some sharp punishment. Who is naturally willing to crucify that which is incorporated with him, the flesh? to deny what is dearest to him, himself? If the apostle 'delighteth in the law of God after the inward man,' Rom. 7:22, an unrenewed man by the rule of contraries delights in the law of sin after the inward man (sin hath the chief fort in his soul); and he that doth so is as unwilling to have it slain as to lop off one of his principal limbs, or fling his whole estate into the sea. Hence Christ pronounceth it hard for a rich man, or one that trusts in his riches, to enter into heaven, Mat 19:23, 24. We are naturally enemies to holiness, which is the fruit of faith, and therefore to the person of Christ, as holy, which cannot, because of his holiness, be embraced by one deeply in love with sin. The laws of Christ are too spiritual to be entertained by a carnal mind; his ways

too strict to be trod by a loose spirit. The inward as well as the outward man must come under his sceptre; and this is a hard task, the stomach swells against it. The righteousness of Christ is a thing without us; it is counted a dishonour to us to be beggars at another's door for happiness; there must be a righteousness also within us, and against this the whole legion of devilish corruptions riseth up in arms. Not any part of the train belonging to faith that nature can look friendly upon; we are unlike God, and we naturally hate everything that would render us comfortable to him.

(3.) Corrupt reason is an enemy to faith, and a friend to unbelief. The life of sense is the first life we live; after that a life of reason, which forestalls faith. Reason is the supreme principle in a man before faith gets footing; it manageth all the actions, and therefore opposes that which would impair part of its sovereignty. Therefore the oppositions that are made to the gospel are called reasonings against the knowledge of Christ, which are strongholds: 2 Cor. 10:4, 5, 'Pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations' (λογισμοὺς, reasonings). Reason exalts itself, and will not submit to revelation, unless it finds marks upon it suitable to its own principles. Not that God doth impose upon men; but whenever he hath made a new revelation of his will, he hath attended it with signs and undeniable evidences that it was of divine authority. But after once it is manifest that the revelation itself is from God, the principles and doctrines delivered in it are not to be cited and tried at the bar of our reason. Yet as man sets his will against the law of God, so he lifts up his reason against the wisdom of God. As enmity to God in the will is as natural to man since the fall as the will, so contradicting reasonings against the knowledge of Christ are as natural as his understanding. As it is impossible a man can be a rational creature without understanding and will, so it is impossible he can be a carnal man without prejudices in his mind and dissatisfactions in his will against God: Rom. 8:7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Unbelief, therefore, is natural to man. Therefore, when God subdues the soul to the obedience of faith, it is in a way of conquest, captivating the

reasonings and thoughts of the mind to Christ. Besides, reason is the excellency and glory of man: the more rational men are, the more they are in esteem; and it is not easy to part with a dignity in submission to that which the heart naturally counts foolishness. Adam, by his affecting to know as God, hath conveyed a principle to men, whereby they think themselves as wise as God. Thus they in the text censured Christ's discourse by their own mistaken reason, believed him not, and at last departed from him.

(4.) The common unbelief of men in things evident to sense manifests the naturalness and easiness of it in the higher mysteries more remote from sense. This is cleared by that one instance of men's flattering themselves into hopes of a perpetual life on earth. Though they seem to assent that they shall die, yet how doth the whole course of many men's actions speak another language, and give the lie to themselves, acting in the extremes of their lives as though they were to linger out an unlimited term of years! If we do not seriously believe that whereof we have every day fresh objects and undeniable testimonies beating in upon our sense, how naturally inclinable must we be not to believe that which is at a distance from us, and whereof we have not such immediate sensible demonstrations! 'If we believe not earthly things, how shall we believe heavenly?' John 3:12. If we believe not things that are agreeable to the light of nature, that arise from the dictates of our own consciences, but manifest our own unbelief of them by a practice quite opposite to them, how shall we believe the heavenly things Christ acquaints us with? How shall we believe those things which are not seen by a natural light, that have no foundation in the nature and reason of men, but are purely to be discerned by the light of heaven? What hath some foundation in nature is far easier to be believed than what hath only supernatural revelation for its bottom. The gospel is a remedy which neither men nor angels could find out; a way which man in a state of innocence was not acquainted with, nor in a state of corruption without special discovery.

(5.) We have naturally jealousies of God. Since enmity to God was planted by the devil in the nature of man, no friendly act can pass from the creature to God. Without a change of nature, suspicions of God do as naturally arise in the heart as fire ascends upward, or a stone falls downward. Who in a state of distance from, and contradiction to, God, can readily believe that God should love men so much as to give his Son for those he had no need of, that were lumps of vanity and enemies to his glory? and yet, if he would give his Son for them, that it should be to a death so painful and shameful? The fear that Adam had* when, frightened at the voice of God, he hid himself amongst the trees of the garden, hath remained in part with his posterity when they reflect upon their crimes. We measure the nature of God by the qualities of our own; and because we are not forward to remit men's offences against us, we are apt to imagine that God hath not clemency enough to pardon the faults committed against him. Hence it is that persons deeply humbled under a sense of the curses of the law are ready to lick up the dust under the feet of Christ, and beholding an absolute necessity of him, are with much ado brought to believe. Though the design of God in setting out Christ for a propitiation be declared to them, the sufficiency of his merit, the acceptation of it by God, the fruits others have found of it, that the design of Christ's coming was to ease those in that condition, yet they are hardly induced to lay aside those jealousies they have of God. For this cause perhaps God doth not put us off in his promise with a single 'I will betroth thee unto me,' but repeats it three times to assure us of his reality, Hosea 2:19, 20. How doth Abraham's incredulity break out after a spiritual promise: Gen. 15:1, 'I am thy shield and exceeding great reward. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' as much as to say, I would have deeds and not words; I have had such promises before, yet they are not performed. After God's discourse with him, it is said, ver. 6, 'he believed in the Lord,' after this second repetition of the promise. But when it was declared to him before, we have not that remark upon him that he believed. And God complains of this carriage, Hosea. 7:13, 'I have redeemed them,' (רָדַף, 'I will redeem them,' it is my purpose to redeem them by my Son, as some

understand it,) 'yet they have spoken lies against me;' they think I have no good intentions towards them, but thoughts of evil. We think him false, when he is true, and cannot lie; we think him an enemy when he is a friend. We are apt to think God hath designs upon us, and wants sincerity in his proposals. So after the deluge, though God had promised that he would no more drown the world, the people would not believe it, but would be erecting a tower to preserve them from sinking again in those mighty waters. Though Noah's sons were at that time living, had known the promise of God, and they had often seen the rainbow, the sign of that covenant in heaven, yet, Gen. 11:4, 'Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered again upon the face of the whole earth.' If this were the reason, as some think, it shews, that they were as unbelieving of the promise of God after the deluge, as the old world had been of his threatening before it. But it is evident in the Israelites, for whom God hath done as much as might be to bind them to a belief of him: he had showered plagues upon their enemies, and miraculous mercies upon themselves, fed and watered them in the wilderness, yet they apprehended God had a design upon them to destroy them, and were scarce ever free from expressing their jealousies by their murmuring, till at last their unbelief was a bar to their entering into Canaan, and the utter ruin of that generation.

(6.) Affecting to stand by a righteousness of our own is natural to us, and therefore unbelief is natural. Adam was to have lived upon his own righteousness in the state of innocence. Since we are fallen, this relic of nature is in us, to desire to rise by our own strength. We would find matter of acceptance and acquittance in ourselves. Some throw themselves upon a heap of external duties, as the heathens had recourse to in their sacrifices, thinking to appease God by the blood of brutes; and believers themselves are sometimes too apt to cling as fast to their inherent graces as to Christ himself,—'We have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?' Mat. 19:27,—and set Christ's crown upon that head. What pains had the apostle to work the Romans and Galatians from their own

righteousness! A desire of a legal justification is inbred. This might be the case of them in the text, when Christ would take them off from their admired shadows, to feed only upon him the substance; to eat his flesh and drink his blood, to believe only in him for eternal life. Sure I am, the Jewish nation split themselves to shivers upon this rock, in a calm sunshine of the gospel, in endeavouring 'the establishment of their own righteousness of God,' Rom. 10:3. This seems to begin early. Before the flood, it is uncertain whether idolatry was set up in the world, or whether after the flood, before the confusion of languages; but resting upon their services, and neglecting the promise of the mediator, seems to be that wherein their unbelief did consist. The patriarchs,* Adam, Seth, &c. had the promise of a mediator, and of pardon of sin in him, and had external rites and modes of sacrificing delivered to them by God, as signs of the promise and props of their faith; these rites and sacrifices, they, i.e. the old world, kept up and performed, without considering the doctrine of the promise and faith; and it is likely that they entertained an opinion, that by those ceremonies they did merit the favour of God, and pardon of sin. This is likely to be Cain's miscarriage; he did offer to God, but without that faith which seasoned Abel's sacrifice, Heb. 11:4; his eye therefore was not fixed upon the promised seed, but probably expected God's acceptance of his offering and favourable return to him upon the account of the offering itself. The object of the worship was the same; Cain brought his offering to the Lord, Gen. 3:3; the difference was in the sacrifice, and in the inward principle of offering. His offering did not represent the mediator, as a bloody sacrifice would have done; the principle of his offering was not faith in the Mediator; for though he desired to be accepted, yet he desired that acceptation without respect to the promised seed. After the deluge, the boldness of men grew to a greater height, they framed other deities, and so departed from the knowledge of the true God, and the promise of a redeemer. And so likewise after Moses, when ceremonies were instituted to be mementoes of a mediator, the multitude, though they professed their belief in the promise of a Messiah, and were the only church God had in the world, yet were forgetful of the intent and design of this

promise, and rested not upon it for the free pardon of their sins for the sake of this mediator; but fancied that their sins were forgiven for the sake of the rites and sacrifices under the law. After the gospel shone upon the world, yet the professors of it were very inclinable to expect a justification by their own works. To oppose which was the great design of the apostle in his epistles to the Gentile churches. And afterward, men professing the Christian religion swerved from the main principle of it, and expected to gain pardon by monastic vows, oblations in the mass, intercessions of dead men, rather than by Christ. So that this principle of a self-righteousness and dependence upon external services, with the neglect of the mediator, being the thing God contended with the Jews for, as well as their idolatry, before the incarnation of Christ, and with others after his death and resurrection, and this being an evil which runs in the stream of nature, we may well suppose it to be the main thing which was the cause of the wickedness, and the destruction of the old world, since it is not clear that they had framed any idols to worship. And since barefaced idolatry is exploded among us, this principle of a self-righteousness is more spiritually lurking in us, whereby we invalidate the redemption by Christ.

(7.) The naturalness of unbelief is evidenced by the difficulty of believing under the highest means, and greatest testimonies of a divine authority.

[1.] The eloquence of Christ was admirable. Grace was in his lips. Since he was both the Word of God, and Wisdom of God, his words were enough to divide the soul, and break the rock; they were like a hammer to bruise, like a gentle shower to mollify; yet how few were either broken by his thunders or melted by his lightnings! He acquainted them with the truth, yet they did not believe, John 8:46. His miracles were stupendous, and above the united force of men and devils; they were undeniably the works of his Father, John 10:37, 38, yet they believed not. Nicodemus, who had some respect for him, and inclinations to him, thinking him 'a prophet come from God,' John 3:2, understood no more the doctrine of faith in Christ, and a

new birth, after Christ's explanation of it, than he did at the first declaration: ver. 9, 'How can these things be?' He was a man of eminency, and in Israel too, ver. 10. It had been no wonder if one of the common people had been ignorant, or a great heathen philosopher, bred up in the sink of idolatry, should neither have understood nor believed; but a master, a doctor in Israel, a reader of the prophets, so lately taught by John Baptist, who was sent to prepare him for the doctrine of the Messiah, not to believe that which was clear in the prophets, is a declaration of the natural stupidity of men in the things of Christ. It was but a little faith the apostles had, who were constant attendants upon Christ, spectators of his miracles, hearers of his instructions, and those more plainly delivered to them than to the multitude. How often doth our Saviour upbraid them with the slowness of their hearts to believe.* The death and resurrection of Christ are the two necessary foundations of our redemption, the one of his satisfaction, the other of his discharge; yet his disciples were hardly brought to believe either of these; and though Christ did plainly assert both, especially the certainty and necessity of his death, in several discourses with them, yet Peter, who had the greatest insight into the mystery of Christ, presumed to rebuke him for speaking of so incredible a thing as the death of him, who by his own confession was the Son of God. And for his resurrection, though he had often asserted it should be, in as plain words as might be, and fixed the time, within three days, yet they had not the least thought of it, and when it was reported to them that he was risen, they had not faith to believe it, though confirmed by witnesses of their own company, whose honesty they knew to be without exception; and it was so great, that he gives them a sharp rebuke for it: Mark 16:14, 'He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.' After the apostles were risen to a great height of faith, they found it difficult to persuade men, with all the miraculous assistances of the Holy Ghost. That first great miracle of the descent of the Spirit upon them, Acts 2:6, 11, wherein the majesty and power of God, and the divine authority of Christ, were evidently manifested, in endowing poor fishermen with the gift of tongues,

who were never out of the confines of Judea, were skilled in no language but their own, could now speak not one or two languages, but many, not those of the neighbours, but those of the greatest distance, with which nations they could not have had any commerce; yet what an unreasonable construction do the unbelieving Jews put upon it: ver. 13, 'These men are full of new wine.' No reason could second their reproach; such an excess had rather hindered their speaking plainly in their own tongue than furnished them with an ability to speak sense in languages they never before understood. Unbelief invents foolish reasons against that which hath the clearest reason to support it. Are our souls less overgrown with an enmity to God? Is unbelief less Natural to us than it was to them under the power of so many miracles, the miracles of Christ, when they called him a wine-bibber, and the miracle of the descent of the Spirit, when they assert the heavenly gift to be the effect of drunkenness? If it were not settled in nature, what is the reason that among multitudes to whom the gospel was preached, so few embraced it, though the things proposed were in themselves desirable, and suited so well, in respect of the blessedness promised, to the natural appetites of men? It was the complaint, that few believed their report. In all ages many, nay, most, have been so far from embracing Christ, that they persecuted the gospel and professors of it. He hath been despised not only by the blinder sort of people, but by many of the most elevated understandings in earthly affairs. By the Jews, too, who had the promises of the Messiah made to them, who expected him about that time, who had so many prophecies deciphering him, which all had their accomplishment in his person; who were amazed at the miracles wrought in his life, and those which attended him at his death; and can unbelief now be less natural to us, who have those things by report, than it was to them who were eye-witnesses of them? I might add also, that the production of faith by an almighty power is a testimony of the naturalness of unbelief. For were it not so, there would be no more need of the arm of omnipotency to be revealed in the engendering this grace in our hearts, than in furnishing us with any human science, for which we have a natural capacity in our understandings. Since faith cannot be infused but by

an almighty strength, unbelief cannot be dispossessed but by the same power, and therefore is rooted in our nature, and friendly embraced by it. It is therefore obvious enough, I hope, that since the Scripture hath told us of the paucity of believers in all ages, and that the exceeding naturalness of it to us is so great and plain, it must be granted, that there may be in this age, and among us, as great a number of unbelievers under the preaching of the gospel, and among professors, too, proportionally, as there have been in other ages and places of the world.

II. Who are unbelievers?

No question but there are many among us inwardly guilty of a notional unbelief, many more guilty of a practical. We have no open idolatry among us,—I mean those of the Protestant party in opposition to the Romanists,—yet is there not an inward practical and interpretative idolatry in the conversations of men? There is not an absolute atheism, or a plain and open denial of a God, yet there is a denial of him in works, Titus 1:16. As God, so Christ, may be denied in works under a profession of him. The testimony of works is deeper and clearer than that of words; the frame of men's hearts is rather to be measured by what they do than by what they say. As such men therefore are more notorious atheists who believe a God and walk contrary to that belief, than those that deny the being of a God and do those things which are more agreeable to the laws of God than the other; so those are more notorious unbelievers that profess an assent to the doctrine of Christ and faith in him, than those that deny his person and office, and yet walk in ways more corresponding with the strictness of his precepts. All that profess faith in Christ, without the vital operations of faith, are unbelievers. We can no more say a man believes who hath no essential act of faith, than that a man lives who exerciseth no function of life. There may be a nominal life with a real death, like those of Sardis, Rev. 3:2, a faith in appearance without a faith in reality. There may be an abhorring of Christ with the soul even by Judah: Zech. 11:8, 'My soul loathed them, their soul also abhorred me.' It is as impossible there can be faith without fruits, as

that a tree can live without bringing forth fruits proper to its kind. There is no question but those are infidels that have an opinionative contradiction against the gospel, who are a gainsaying people, as the Jews are termed, Rom. 10:21, who at this day call the New Testament a heap of lies, בליון און.* Such that may be of that pope's mind, Gregory IX., who is reported to have called Moses and Christ, as well as Mahomet, tres Balatrones, the common barreters or incendiaries of the world. And as little are they to be counted believers that esteem the Christian religion no better than a certain suspicion of 'one Jesus being dead, who is affirmed to be alive,' Acts 25:19; that have some floating imaginations of the truth of it, but not a settled certainty. Those that resist the grace of God, that value Christ no more than a dog doth a heap of spices or a bag of delicate perfumes; those that strike the blood of the Lamb of God upon their thresholds to be mixed with the dirt of their feet, which they should sprinkle upon the posts of their doors, the faculties of their souls.

But to waive these at present. Let us consider those that pretend to be disciples of Christ.

1. How many that go under the name of Christians are ignorant and inconsiderate! He that is not rooted in spiritual knowledge can never be rooted in faith; those that see not the beauty of Christ can never account him a fit object of trust. Faith can never be the daughter of ignorance. Only those that know Christ will put their trust in him—Ps. 9:10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee'—and that know him to be one that doth not forsake them that seek him. Belief is an intellectual act; how can any believe till they know what they are to believe? The object must be known before any faith can be exercised about it. If we would believe a man, we must first know him to be a person of credit. The ground must be known to be firm before any man will trust the weight of his body upon it. We must know God in his ways, so as to judge him faithful, before we can rely upon his promise: 'Sarah judged him faithful that had promised,' Heb. 11:11. If there be no light in the mind, there can be no motion in the will: 'He

that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes,' John 12:35, nor what to lay hold on for his support. How can they be counted believers that know not what Christ is, what offices he is invested with, that cannot give an account of the doctrine of Christ, that never considered the nature of a Christ, the necessity of a Saviour, the corruption of their nature, the immortality of their souls, the judgment to come; who have only some loose thoughts of these things, and therefore cannot have but a loose and shadowy faith at the best, which is an unbelief in the account of Christ? And are there not many among us that understand not what Christ and a spiritual righteousness is, that know not their own wants, and so cannot value Christ's worth?

2. How many receive not the gospel upon a divine account? There are several outward engines which move men to profess the Christian religion: authority of magistrates and superiors, education and custom, respect to some persons valued by them. Some are Christians because Christianity hath been handed to them from their ancestors, and can give no other reason why they are so but because they were bred up in it. The religion of the state is the rule also of many men's religion. What else should make those tribes of Israel, who were fond of the temple-worship in Solomon's time, turn speedy votaries to the calves at Dan and Bethel under Jeroboam's reign, and at last totally revolt from God? Such a founded Christianity is no more sufficient to denominate any man a believer, than a flock of sheep, used to the voice of the shepherd from their first yearning, and to follow his whistle wheresoever he goes, can upon that account be said to be rational creatures.

(1.) The motives of this faith are merely human. The object of faith is divine, but the motive human; the faith therefore produced by it cannot be divine; the effect cannot be of an higher nature than the cause. This belief is as vain as Christ declares the worship to be which is 'taught by the precepts of men,' Mat. 15:9. Though they have the material object of faith,* yet they have not the formal object, which is the divine authority or truth revealed in it. They take it up

from custom and the instructions of their childhood, but not from the true motive of faith. As some men may perform acts of moral virtue, not from principles and motives of virtue, and so may do a righteous act, though not righteously, so those have the object of faith without a principle of faith, and pretend a belief of the truth, but not believingly. The material part of Christianity, without the formal, is just like a carcass, which hath the matter of a man, but not the enlivening and quickening soul. Though they hit upon the profession of the true religion by some human inducements, this makes them no more Christians and believers than if a company of wandering cattle, gone astray from their owner, should break into some ground belonging to their true master in that place whither they are run, should be understood to do it with an intention to come into their master's possession, it being an act of chance in them, and not of choice. It is not the excellency of Christ, but the happiness of an education, the piety of parents and magistrates, the birth and not the judgment, makes them Christians. They are believers by conformity, not by principle. He that embraceth the Christian religion upon such slight or wrong grounds is so far from being a believer, that he rather sins, because he doth not use his reason God hath endowed him with aright in the things of God; was the speech of a philosopher* whose new notions have been thought to minister too great an occasion to the atheism of our times.

(2.) This kind of faith hath no stronger a foundation than the belief of any heathen or idolater in the world. The same motives that excite the papists to observe the superstitions and idolatries of Rome, a heathen to adore the idols of his country, a Turk to cry up the divine authority of Mahomet, a Jew to hate the Lord of life, because they have received those ways of profession from their ancestors, and have sucked them in with the milk of their infancy,—such and no higher motives have common Christians for their faith in Christ. The same arguments which make others refuse him, make them profess him, and had they been educated in any of those ways, they would have been as fond adorers of idols, as now they are professors of Christ, and would have been as ready to drink blood as wine, as

sheep will follow their first leader into a slough as well as a fat pasture. This is no better than to be heathens in Christianity, since they both agree in the same inducement of their faith, which can be no more called a true faith, than the Athenians' altar 'to the unknown God' could be called a true worship, Acts 17:23; they worshipped they knew not whom, and they knew not why. This is an unbelieving belief, and a childish Christianity, if it proceeds no further. True faith may be ushered in this way, as the faith of the Samaritans was by the report of the woman, testifying that Christ had told her all that ever she did, John 4:39, but afterwards was transplanted to another ground, and set upon a stock of knowledge,—ver. 42, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,'—and indeed was a greater faith than we find at that time in the apostles; for they believe him not only to be the Messiah, and a Saviour of the seed of Abraham, as the apostles did, but of the world; acknowledging thereby the whole world sunk into misery, under a necessity of a redeemer, and this Jesus to be the person appointed by God for the redemption of it.

(3.) Such a belief is rather a disparaging of God and Christ, than a believing in them. If we embrace divine truths out of affection or interest in persons or parties, and for the sake of the instruments which convey them, rather than of God who reveals them, we believe not in God but in man; our faith terminates in the publisher, whether parent, or magistrate, or neighbour, not in God. If the motive of our belief is not the authority of God, but the influence of some creature on us, or because wise, learned, and holy men believe it, we postpone the credit of a wise and holy God to that of a wise and holy creature, and ascribe a greater veracity to that than to the Creator; so that though the matter of our faith be divine, yet the manner of our acknowledging discredits the authority and faithfulness of God. As if we believe this or that divine truth delivered in the word, not because it is there delivered, and hath the stamp of God's authority upon it, but because it is in itself undeniable to principles of reason, we believe ourselves rather than God, and thereby reproach and

dishonour him, by setting our reason, not as a subject to him, but as a judge of him, and what he dictates. The creation of the world is a matter of faith revealed in the word: Heb. 11:3, 'By faith we understand,' &c. It is also a truth assented to by reason. But if we acknowledge the creation of the world only upon the account of reason, and not in the respect of the revelation of God, God accounts it not as an honour to him, for it is not a respect to the word of God, but to our own rational principle. To believe, therefore, a divine truth upon human grounds, is to regard man as more infallible, true, and honest, than God himself. As we are to obey because God commands, though men may command the same things too; and if we perform a thing merely because our superiors enjoin us, though it be a divine command also, and part of the law of God, it is not an obedience to God, but to our superiors; so when we believe a divine truth revealed to the world by God, not upon the credit of God, but the credit of the persons that acquaint us with it, it is not a belief of God but of man: as if a master orders his servant to go upon such an errand, and he cheerfully and willingly goes, because he hath some business to do that way by the by, this cheerfulness ariseth not from a principle of obedience to his master, but from the opportunity of serving his own turn. As it is thus in obedience, so it is also in the belief of men. Also, when men will assent to no more of the articles of the word than what is made clear to them by natural reason, as well as Scripture arguments, this is not a faith. Though they believe some of the fundamentals, yet if they believe not all those that are fundamental, they truly believe not any one; because if they did believe one upon account of the divine authority revealing it, they would believe all. For as it is a certain maxim, He that breaks one law of God breaks the whole, James 2:10, because he despiseth the authority commanding, so he that discredits one article of faith believes not any, because he undervalues the authority revealing one as well as the other. Though the materials of faith be divided into many things, even as many truths as are revealed, yet the foundation and motive of faith is but one, viz., the authority of God; as, though the law be divided into several commands, yet the authority commanding all is one and the same. He that refuseth a belief to any one article, though

he doth not deny all, yet he believes none with a divine faith; for if he did believe any one with a divine faith, he hath the same reason to believe every one, because the same authority runs through the veins of all, and is as infallible in one as another. If we received any one truth as testified by the Spirit of God, we should receive all the truths the Spirit witnesseth to. Those that are charged in the text with unbelief, might believe many things that Christ said, for they are called his disciples; but not receiving them from him as a person appointed by God as the Messiah, they are said not to believe; all their faith in other things was no faith.

Let us then try ourselves by this, what are the motives of our profession of Christianity? If they be merely human, we are unbelievers in our believing, and are the disciples of men, not the disciples of Christ. A profession now cannot lay such claim to sincerity as those sudden conversions to and acknowledgments of Christianity could in the primitive times; because then the civil power did not countenance it, no carnal interest could encourage them in it, none but inward and spiritual motives could prevail upon them for the owning of it. But since it hath been delivered to us through a long succession of ages, and it is become, in part, our outward interest to be external professors of it, the profession is not sufficient to entitle a man a believer, unless his motives be as divine as theirs.

3. All those who do not diligently seek after that which is proposed in the gospel, come into this rank of unbelievers. As the psalmist argues the atheism of men from their not seeking God, Ps. 14:1, 2, and the apostle the unrighteousness of men from the same ground, Rom. 3:10, 11, so the unbelief of men may be demonstrated from their non-inquiry after Christ, the benefits offered, and the precepts enjoined by him. When we have no valuations of it, when the gospel is not esteemed as the richest jewel, the sweetest dainties, the most ravishing comforts; when it is not sought after with ardent affections, it is not thought worthy of acceptation by the whole man. Can he be supposed to believe he hath a soul, who never minds it? Or can he

believe that there is a Saviour, who can go whole months and years without inquiries after him? He that is desperately sick and wounded, I and hears of an infallible medicine without employing all his industry to procure it, is either in love with the wound, or doth not believe the medicine so sovereign as is reported! Can we believe that to be necessary for us, that we have no heart to think of? Whosoever is more diligent in things of an inferior concern, supposeth them in his judgment more capable to administer satisfaction to him than the things of Christ. Can we be called believers, if we be no more moved than stones with the purchase and promise of Christ? Insensibleness and unbelief are inseparable companions: Acts 19:9, they 'were hardened, and believed not.' If we were informed of a place full of all earthly advantages, and rich commodities at an easy rate, how ambitious would men be to set out ships to be interested in the trade, or at least inform themselves of the truth of the report. If men did believe the gospel, and the rewards of another world, could they sit yawning, with folded arms, without making inquiries after them? Would they not be full of great undertakings for them? How can our understandings be fully possessed of the goodness of that which our wills do not ardently pursue? If our minds believe it, why do not our wills embrace it? What bar is there between the understanding and the will? In other things, the last judgment of the mind is followed: what that pronounceth good, the will is presently upon the track of; what makes the stop here, if the gospel were assented to. The order of God's working is according to the order of nature, the understanding first enlightened, then the will inclined. If then the will be not inclined to the things of Christ, the understanding was never fully prevailed upon to assent to the truths of Christ. Belief among men is a vigorous act, that makes them govern themselves according to their persuasions; and why should it be less in matters of religion? If Paul believe the knowledge of Christ so excellent, he will 'press forwards towards the mark,' Philip. 3:8, 12, 14. He will follow after, he will thrust through a crowd of temptations to gain Christ. Can we then be said to believe that Christ hath expiated our sins, calmed the wrath of God, stands ready to knock off our chains, and hath prepared a

blessed residence in paradise, without seeking the enjoyment of such necessary benefits? The sottishness of the Jewish rulers is a picture of that which will be in some men to the end of the world. They sent a committee of their Sanhedrim to John Baptist to know whether he was the Messiah, John 1:19; they were persons of authority and learning among them, 'priests and Levites;' they were sent from Jerusalem, from the great council, to know what his calling was: 'Who art thou?' John told them he was not the Messiah, but that the Messiah was come, and among them, 'whom they knew not,' ver. 26. Now it is strange that those men who expected the Messiah about that time, and came to John for that end, to know whether he was the person (for when they asked him, 'Who art thou?' he answered, 'I am not the Christ,' ver. 20, intimating that the intent of their coming to him was to know whether he was the Christ), should not ask him where the Messiah was, who was this person that he said was among them, and greater than he, how they should know him that was so near to them, and how he himself knew him. But they depart without asking one syllable of this nature, which John gave them so full an opportunity to inquire into, as if they were resolved to reject him before they knew him. They are imitated in the world to this day. If we seek him with loose affections, it is a sign we have only some suspicions of the necessity of him, not a certainty; a faint search ariseth from a weak conjecture.

4. Profane persons are unquestionably unbelievers. A diabolical life and a believing heart are contradictions. No man can with any reason lay claim to a faith in Christ, who prefers the pleasures of the world before the sweetness of a Redeemer, that which is an offence to him before that which is his delight, the weight of sin before the yoke of Christ. How can they believe in Christ that are carried down with the violent current of their own lusts, and regard not one little of his law? If faith be full of good works, a scarcity of them implies an emptiness of faith.

(1.) The proper effect of faith is to purify the heart, Acts 15:9; where therefore the kennel of the life and the sink of the heart are not

purified, there is no faith. What wants the essential effect hath nothing of the cause. If 'unfeigned faith' be always attended with 'a pure heart and good conscience,' 1 Tim. 1:5, then that faith which is attended with an impure heart and a defiled conscience is a counterfeit faith. If a good man fall into any sin, there is first a flaw in his faith; the soundness of that would prevent the disease of sin. Hence Christ prays that Peter's faith might not fail, implying that if that kept firm he would give no kindly glance to a temptation, to cursing, swearing, and denying his master. Let no man boast therefore of his faith, if it leaves him in the mire of vice. It is an idol of faith, such an one that the apostle calls but a carcase of faith, James 2:26, a dead faith, nay, ranks it with the faith of devils, who believe and tremble, who have no profit by it but a sense of damnation before the time. Is it not a faith worse than that of devils? They have a belief with a fear; some boast of a faith in Christ, but a want of fear. A profane faith, an adulterous faith, a drunken faith, are contradictions.

(2.) 'He that commits sin is of the devil,' 1 John 3:8, not of Christ. He that is under the devil's empire never was Christ's subject by believing. The language of their practice is the same with that of the evil spirits, 'What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?' Not to believe the truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness, in the unrighteousness of nature, in the unrighteousness of practice, are made one and the same thing, 2 Thes. 2:12. The knowledge of God makes men at least escape the pollutions of the world,' 2 Peter 2:20. This is the lowest degree; whence in consequence is clear that those that are bemired with the pollutions of the world have not the knowledge of Christ. We have no acquaintance with Christ if we cherish those works which Christ came to dissolve and melt away by his blood, and go about to settle the sovereignty of the devil against the authority of the Redeemer. Can you imagine him to be a loyal subject who gives himself that character, when you see him with arms in his hands against his prince and country? Nor is he a Christian, whatsoever he may call himself, who is a rebel against Christ his sovereign. Such are loath to be thought to doubt of the

truth of the gospel, but their lives proclaim that they do not in the least doubt of the falseness of it. Is it possible that those should believe that God sent his Son to die for them, who will not let a lust die to save his glory in the world? A descent to brutishness can never be an assent to Christianity; a filthy swine may as well be a believer as a sensualist in that state; 'as brute beasts they corrupt themselves,' walking in the ways of their own heart. Whatsoever some of the Philippians might profess, yet making 'their belly their god,' the apostle affords them no better character than 'enemies of the cross of Christ,' Philip. 3:18, 19. It is not opinion but practice distinguisheth a Christian from a pagan. Vile lusts are appropriated to the Gentiles as their will; they are not the qualifications of a believer's will, 1 Peter 4:3. No man can receive Christ, but he must receive him as a refiner, Mal. 3:3, with the blood of sprinkling, which purgeth the inwards of the heart, as well as the skirts of the conversation, and sets an edge upon the conscience against everything that is contrary to the plain precept of Christ, and brings the thoughts and desires under his law and yoke. Profane men are the disciples of Epicurus, not the disciples of Jesus. It is as impossible for a man to be an invisible believer and a visible atheist, as to be a man and a toad at the same time.

5. All that live in a constant omission of known duties (though they are not guilty of the grosser open sins), are unbelievers.* Every omission of good, or commission of evil, is not an evidence of positive infidelity (who could, then, have the noble title of a believer?), but when the omission is a constant course. As every actual omission is a fruit of partial unbelief, so all habitual omissions are signs of habitual unbelief, when they are not accompanied with a self-condemnation in the case, and resolutions of reforming for the future. How can we be said to believe in Christ, if we own not the power of that religion he hath instituted, and the holiness of it in the duties it requires, as well as the pleasure of it in the privileges it bestows? When our sloth will not permit us to rise at Christ's call; when our thoughts do but now and then hit upon him, as a bird upon a branch; when his service is a vile thing in our eyes; when we can with as good a heart overlook duties as perform them; when we make

other things our business, and the precepts of Christ our burden, is this a believing on him? Faith fights against all iniquity, and obeys not God by parcels and retail. He that cannot endure the injunctions of the gospel in the fulness and extent of their holiness, is an unbeliever: 2 Peter 2:21, 'they turn from the holy commandment,' because of the purity of its commands, and the universal obedience it requires: there is an enmity to it in the hearts of men. The gospel is a 'doctrine according to godliness,' 1 Tim. 6:3–5. If we do not consent to the godliness of it, but doat about questions and curiosities; if we receive the light of it into our heads, and not the religion of it into our hearts, we are destitute of the truth, know nothing, believe nothing. If we make light of what God commands, we are no more Christians than the most ignorant Indian and heathen in America; we are not so good as a Jew, who believes the Old Testament, practiseth those duties it enjoins, and the legal rites which he supposeth still in force. Worse we are, if our hearts be not moulded according to the form of the gospel; for Christianity is not a speculation, or a dead notion, but an active principle, mastering every faculty of the soul; as active in the will as it is clear in the understanding. He is more an infidel that assents to the truth of a proposition, and the doctrine of the gospel, and yet denies obedience to it, than he that denies the divine authority of it, yet walks morally, and performs the duties incumbent upon him to man; because he in some measure doth that which he denies, the other denies that which he doth profess. The one's denial is verbal, the other's real; one hath a moral conscience, the other a vain religion, James 1:26. Habitual sins are evidences that we are not implanted in Christ by faith, but still under a covenant of works: Rom. 6:14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.' The reign of any one sin in the heart, whether of omission or commission (though it be not of the grosser sort marked by the world), is inconsistent with that faith which interests us in the covenant of grace; for true faith expels sin from the heart, as a candle doth darkness from the lantern wherein it is placed. All the doctrines and propositions in Christianity do in their own nature lead to an holy practice. The articles of the conception, incarnation, and life of

the Son of God, are incentives to be like our great head and master. The gospel frees us not from the natural obligation upon us as creatures to obey God; nay, Christ by his death could not free us from it, because the law of nature is immutable and perpetual. As by his death he did not free us from being creatures, so neither could he free us from the obligation which lies upon us as creatures; but the satisfaction Christ made to God increaseth the obligation; for whereas before we were to obey God as creatures, we are now bound to obey God as redeemed creatures; therefore he that is as disobedient to the precepts of Christ as if Christ had never died, hath not a faith in his blood, nor any sense of the obligation of it. How is it possible a man should believe Christ to be the true prophet of God,* without embracing his doctrine? How can we believe him to be an High Priest dying to expiate our sin, without loving him, reflecting often upon our sin with sorrow, and shewing our gratitude in a course of habitual obedience? How can we believe him to be a mighty and gracious King, without reverencing and fearing him? How can we believe the gospel to be a divine truth, without devoting ourselves to that holiness which it enjoins, under the penalty of never seeing God without it? We cannot be persuaded of his divinity without giving credit to his doctrine, nor believe his doctrine without conforming to his law. If, therefore, the will of Christ be contemned in any one thing, we may be assured we believe not the gospel of Christ. If we would put such base conditions upon him, as to have a reserve of any one lust in our hearts, we dislike his terms, disown his royal dignity; and though we would acknowledge him our Saviour, we make him an insignificant Lord. If we have no love to him and his commands we have no faith in him.

Therefore they do not believe,

(1.) Who wholly neglect the means of grace. He that rejects his word, rejects his person, because he rejects all the means of the discovery of himself, which he after his ascension left upon the earth. What his messengers declare according to his order and the rule of his word, is as if he himself declared it; whence the apostle tells the Ephesians,

Eph. 1:17, that Christ preached peace to them; not by himself, for he was never in person there, but by his apostle. Those that condemn all the means God hath appointed, may be rationally thought not to believe any one article of Christianity, though they usurp the name of Christians. By the same reason that faith purifies the heart, it puts a man upon all those means which may promote that purification, and increase the vigour of a divine life. They that will not 'know the joyful sound,' have no mind to 'walk in the light of God's countenance,' Ps. 89:15.

(2.) Who never look into the Scripture. Have they a faith in Christ who have no mind to know his will? What a contempt of a prince would it be to neglect the reading a kind letter from him, or a commanding order! The gospel brings men to obedience by its promises and threatenings, as by moral instruments: 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Having those promises, let us cleanse ourselves.' If we never look into them, it is a sign we have no mind to believe them, or be under the influence of them. When the credit of them is weakened, the efficacy of them is lost; for no moral instrument can work without an assent to it. Who can be said to believe in Christ, that hath no mind to understand his doctrine, and read the records of his will? What little credit hath God with us, when we do not constantly take hold of that cord which God lets down from heaven to fetch our souls up to him! The belief of an eternal life is little or none, if the Scriptures are not searched, which point out the way to it, John 5:39. He that will not dig into it, doth not imagine any treasure laid up in it, and believes not anything of a legacy of grace in the will and testament of Christ, that flings it at his heels, or only reads it as a story, and a thing of course.

(3.) Who never pray to God, or content themselves with formal and customary addresses to him. This sin of unbelief, being in its own nature 'a departure from God,' Heb. 3:12, a total neglect of any approach to him, or an unwillingness to have any commerce with him, testifies this sin to be predominant in the heart. He scarce believes there is a God, that will not offer him a spiritual sacrifice,

and give him in this duty the glory of all his attributes. Prayer is the first act of faith, the vital act of the new creature; 'a spirit of grace and supplication' are inseparable, Zech. 12:10; God gives not one without the other. A still-born child is a dead child; a prayerless Christian is a dead Christian, that hath nothing of the life of faith; crying is natural to a child, it is not learned by art. Where there is a full assent to the truths of the gospel (which is the first act of faith), it engenders a vehement appetite for the benefits of it. Prayer is nothing but a reducing this appetite into act, and proposing it to God; the total omission of it, or constant slight performance, is a sign of a dissent from the gospel. We cannot but be zealous for those things we believe to be true and necessary; but when we think the benefit will not recompense the pain and labour, we shall be cold and dull. Where there is a performance of this duty out of natural conscience, but a faintness and languishment in it, it is a sign of too great a predominancy of it, Luke 18:7, 8. Christ, speaking of prayer, and crying day and night, adds, that he should scarce find faith on the earth at his second coming; they should be grown dull in prayer, out of a belief that God would not avenge them.

(4.) Who never exercise any serious sorrow for sin. Where there is a faith in Christ, there will be a delight in his law; and a delight in his law cannot be without a resentment of the violations of it. It is impossible he can seriously believe that Christ came to expiate the sin of the world, the sin of nature, and the streams of it, that is not affected with the evil of that sin which put Christ to such sorrow. As the Spirit of grace and supplication are inseparable, so a look upon Christ, and a mourning for sin, are undivided companions, Zech. 12:10; the sense of the sweetness of Christ is not without a bitterness of soul. Every believer imitates Christ. If Christ groaned under it, he will groan for it; he will look with a wet eye upon all corrupt propensions to that which is contrary to him. If a true believer would not have a lust live, he cannot but mourn, that notwithstanding all his pains, he cannot make it utterly die. No man can believe that Christ died upon the occasion of sin, and condemned sin by his death, that doth not grieve that ever he cherished such an enemy to

Christ, and lament also that it is not thoroughly executed as well as condemned. If we believe he is risen, should we not bewail our clogs, which hinder us from following him in a resurrection to a newness of life? Faith and love are inseparable both in habit and act. Peter's faith flagged before he denied his Master; his love did not revive till his faith was out of its swoon; and both joining together presently engendered a mourning for his sin; and we scarce find Paul, in his highest exercises of faith, without humbling reflections upon his former sin.

6. All that are wholly sunk into worldly affections are unbelievers. He that hath an high opinion of the world's fulness, hath an opinion of Christ's emptiness. Where men's longings are most for the goods of the world, they are little or nothing for the benefits of the gospel; they cannot amount to that hungering and thirsting, that vehemency of desire, for the benefits of redemption by Christ. Would not he neglect the lesser things that believed greater? Can any man be very earnest to be temporally blessed, who believes Christ came to purchase an eternal happiness? Would any man spend his time in the making of puppets, that believed that, with as much earnestness, he might gain a crown? Who would ever rake dunghills, that believed a substantial treasure might be possessed at an easier rate? Who would ever sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, that believed it to be an excellent privilege? Who would drink of a puddle, that did believe a fountain accessible to him? He cannot be a believer that values everything above that Christ he pretends to believe in; that thinks vain riches or pleasure worthy of industry, and overlooks the blood and righteousness of Christ. I appeal to any, whether such can be accounted believers. A filthy swine may as well claim the title. The apostle joins the swinish belly-gods and the covetous earth-worms together, among the professing Philippians, as 'enemies to the cross of Christ,' Philip. 3:18, 19. Can enemies to the cross of Christ be believers in a crucified Saviour, who is the formal object of faith? Earth is the furthest distant from heaven, and earthy affections at the greatest distance from Christ. Job approves the sincerity of his trust in God, by not having confidence in the things of the earth, as well as

in avoiding the common idolatry of the age, Job 31:24–26. All our revolts from God arise from two causes: unbelief of the blessings of the gospel-promise, and deceitfulness of sin, in regard of the goods of this world, Heb. 3:12, 13. To turn from God infers that there is not a belief that he is an infinite good,* sufficient for our happiness, and to be valued above all other things; and to turn to the creature, as if that were the source of our blessedness, implies a deceitfulness of sin in the understanding, i.e. wrong opinions of God and Christ, and the things of this world. He that doth not make God his chiefest good, but placeth his confidence in anything else, is an unbeliever; and he doth not make God his chiefest good that thinks anything can make him happy without God, or that thinks God alone cannot make him happy without earth. If earthly things be preferred before supernatural objects, it is easy to conclude such an one understands not the excellency of that which he so slights. No man but will judge him ignorant of the virtue and worth of a diamond, that believes a brass ring to be of greater value, or chooseth a Bristol stone before it. It is as impossible to believe in Christ, and rely upon the world, as to love God and the world in an equal supremacy; the love of this is inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John 2:15. If Moses had preferred the pleasure of the Egyptian court and kingdom before the reproach of Christ, it had been sufficient evidence of no faith in the Messiah, Heb. 11:24, 26. Well, do we believe that the least particle of glory is better than the empire of the whole world, and yet will not deny ourselves the least pleasure for heaven? Do we labour without ceasing, and with a world of trouble, for a little worldly pelf? this could not be, if we did believe the excellency of Christ, that he came to overcome the world, and hath writ contempt upon it, both in his life and death.

7. Distrusters of the providence and promise of Christ, and murmurers at his proceedings. There is a constant murmuring and distrust which shews the reign of unbelief, as a partial murmuring shews a relic of it: Ps. 106:24, 25, 'They believed not his word, but murmured in their tents;' as if it were more desirable to be under the Egyptian scourge than God's protection in the wilderness. This was

partial in Abraham; his faith faltered in the courts of Pharaoh and Abimelech, when he would save himself by a lie, owning Sarah to be his sister, who was his wife. But it is from a total unbelief, when there is a despondency without seeking to God, when the heart faints, and the hands are not lifted up, when men can weep and howl under their afflictions, as totally undone, and be shut up in a perpetual silence towards heaven like a senseless stake, when they venture upon some forbidden path for their remedy, and move hell rather than heaven for their relief. This was the posture of the heart of Job's wife in that blasphemous advice to him: Job 2:9, 'Curse God and die;' or a bloody mockery of him, if the words be translated, as some do,* 'Bless God and die.' You have served God indeed for a fine reward, you had best go on blessing him still, and meet with death for your pains. But are you so brutish as not to discern God's disaffection to you, who else would never have reduced you to those extremities? And by the like temptation, Satan hoped he should be our Saviour's conqueror: Mat. 4:3, 6, 'Command these stones to be made bread.' The voice from heaven which told you you were the Son of God, was a mere illusion. Can the Son of God be exposed to such a condition as to live in a desert, without refreshment for his hunger, and repose for his body? Would a good father refuse bread to his famished child? If you are therefore the Son of God, for whom the heavens were opened, and upon whom the Holy Ghost visibly descended, turn those stones into bread to appease your hunger: thus he tempted him to impatience with his heavenly Father. Promises are not believed where there are disputes against providence, and an unwillingness to wait upon God for his wise conduct of affairs and successful event. Faith crucifies discontents, and unbelief arms them against God and others. When the soul is out-witted by the smallest crosses, and questions the providence of God upon every occasion, as though he had left the government of the world to chance and the power of men, he hath little evidence to shew for his faith. How can we think Christ stored with a fulness to redress our necessities, if upon every light disappointment we murmur against him, and complain of his want of truth and love? How can any trust him with their immortal souls, when they will not trust him with their perishing concerns?

Can we believe he has shed his blood for the expiation of our sins (the greatest affair his divine person could undertake) if we cannot submit to him for our earthly comforts? If we resign not ourselves to his wisdom for the management of these, we shall hardly believe his merit sufficient for the purchase of other. This being the fruit of too much anxiety, which is but the stream of this poisonous fountain, evidenceth a man as little a believer as a heathen who knows nothing of the provision made by Christ. By this Christ distinguisheth the Gentiles from his disciples: Mat. 6:31, 32, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all those things do the Gentiles seek.' If there be then a predominant impatience (which is a fruit of this solicitousness, a quality proper to a Gentile), it will render the professor of no higher elevation in faith than the pagans, who were darkened in their mind, and in the rubbish of carnality. We cannot think him a sufficient security for that part of us which must run along with eternity, when we will not trust him with the little clay we possess in the world. Little credit can be given to the promises of the gospel, where there is a prevailing diffidence of his providential care.

8. Doubters of the grace of God in Christ. Not every doubt of something contained in the word before it be clearly known to be in the word; the Bereans had then merited a dispraise rather than a commendation. If we do not examine things before we embrace them, we may receive we know not what, and we know not why. Nor are doubts for resolution and clearing things revealed tokens of infidelity. Mary's question upon the angel's message to her of conceiving Jesus, who should be called the Son of the Highest—Luke 1:34, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?'—was not a question of unbelief, but of a desire of clearer information in the manner how this should come to pass. Nor are strong motions of questioning the being of a God, the truth of redemption, and faithfulness and fulness of the promise, testimonies of infidelity, provided they be abhorred and repelled with an holy indignation. Christ had then been an atheist himself, and a distruster of the promises made by the Father to him, who was as strongly moved to it

by Satan, as also to fall down and worship that head of rebellion, as ever any man was, Mat. 4. Nor are those doubts which arise at the first conversion, and beginnings of faith, when the state of the soul is like to that of the twilight, a mixture of light and darkness. Nor those which sometimes assault strong believers, as when Asaph doubted whether there were any mercy left in God, when he imagined God had barred up any motion of his bowels towards him. This was a start of passion, a pang of unbelief, not an evil heart of unbelief; his infirmity: Ps. 77:10, 'This is my infirmity.' A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubt before it springs into a flame; this is a partial unbelief, because there is imperfectio actús. But when there is a prevailing doubting of the goodness and truth of the gospel, which is the property of an absolute unbelief; or though this be not questioned, yet there is a doubt of the relation and extent of the promise as to our particular, till the soul closeth with the promise of God in the gospel, it is an unbelief.* It is not like Peter, who staggered when he began to sink, yet casts a look and sends forth a cry to Christ, acknowledging his sufficiency: Mat. 14:30, 'Lord, save me.' But the soul is like a ship tossed with the waves of the sea, without an anchor, dashing against every rock and upon every shelf. It stays not on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, but like Cain cries out, 'My sin is greater than I can bear,' Gen. 4:13. This is an utter rejection of the abundance of grace, and a scanty contracting the infiniteness of God's mercy and Christ's merit, as though our iniquity were more efficacious than divine goodness. Though this is not so openly frequent among us, there being more presumers than despairers, yet this is included in a recourse to anything but Christ. When we are sensible of the fiery tempest of God's indignation for sin, as though there were not shadow and shelter enough under the wing of the Lord Jesus, there is not a belief that he is able and willing to save all those that come to him, but jealousies of God and of the authority and divinity of the Scripture entertained and cherished, as when we are jealous of a friend, we shall be so far from believing him, that we shall misconstrue the plainest and clearest declarations he makes; as the Israelites, under the promise of mercy and experience of a deliverance, imagined God intended nothing but

their destruction; that the mercy of manna, quails, and water in the wilderness, were the presages of God's anger with them. Such habitual doubts and habitual misconstructions, are evidences of habitual unbelief. All unhumiliated persons are not only to doubt, but despair, of the grace of God while they remain in that condition, and wallow in the mire of the old Adam. God doth not require that we should immediately rely on Christ without falling out with sin, nor can there be a relying act of faith without a resigning act; but when a soul is deeply sensible of its undone condition, accounts itself guilty before God, and will not reach out a hand to lay hold upon the promise of the gospel, nor bring a vessel to receive its treasures; though such may be in the way of faith, yet they are at present in a state of unbelief, confusion, and darkness, and at best like meteors hanging in the air, and fixed nowhere. They understand not the perfections of God shining forth in Christ as an object of trust and confidence. As some doublings are a sign of little faith—'Why doubt ye, O ye of little faith?'—so habitual doubtings are a sign of a want of faith. When we question the whole tenor of the gospel, and reason against the design and intention of it, we cannot in that act be accounted believers.

We might further instance

In hypocrites. No man could be so prodigiously mad to put on a mask and personate the outward garb of a convert, without endeavouring after the inward frame, if he did believe the declarations of the gospel in its commands, promises, and threatenings.

In apostates, that begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; who have an Hosanna for Christ one day, and, upon a turn of the wind, Crucify him the next; that seem to value his blood in their hearts, and shortly trample it under their feet; that take their leave of him when the sun shines hot, or the storms blow hard, and prefer sin before the reproach of Christ, imagining that to embark in the same bottom with him is to be cast away for ever. Such a generation is adulterous,

Mark 8:38; they absolutely violate the covenant, and declare they have no mind to keep it. When our professions rise and fall according to a worldly interest, it is a faith like the motion of a weather-glass. All indeed who have not the operations of faith are unbelievers. Faith is an active thing, and can no more lie idle than fire in an heap of tow.

III. The third inquiry is, What are the causes of unbelief?

1. Original corruption. From the womb we go astray from God, Ps. 58:3. Departure from God is rooted in our nature;* it grows with us in the womb, springs with us into the world. An evil heart of infidelity is as old as our life. We are as much disputers against the promises of God by nature, as we are rebels against the law of God, and have as little reliance upon his truth, as we have conformity to his holiness; as little will to be beholden to his mercy, as we have to acknowledge his sovereignty. Our whole man is enmity to him; and the object of our enmity is not one, but all, the perfections of God. The state of our hearts is such by nature that we are more prone to believe anything, though an irrational and idle fable, than the truth of God. Adam did so, and our misery is that we are his children, and exceeding like him. He would stand by the strength of his own understanding, and aimed at a self-sufficiency more than life. He might have eaten of the tree of life, which, say some, was a type of Christ, from whom he was to expect his confirmation, and to whom he was wholly to subject his understanding. It was by Christ as his head, though not as the seed of the woman, that Adam was to be confirmed in an innocent state, as well as the angels are by him confirmed in a perpetual grace and blessedness. If it be so (which I do not assert, though it would deserve consideration), our unbelief of Christ, and the benefits offered by him, runs more directly in a blood, and is more rooted in our nature, than any other sin. It is certain that the first sin was pride, and unbelief of God's threatening. But upon this notion his sin was a refusal of Christ as the root of his standing, to settle himself upon his own bottom, and not wait for his settlement from the wisdom of God, by whom he was created. And,

as we have declared before the probability of this being the first sin of the devil, so it is not unlikely but that this was the first sin of Adam, by the temptation of the devil, endeavouring to engage man in his party against the Son of God. But that the tree of life was a type of Christ, the Scripture seems to deny, Gen. 3:22; the reason rendered of his expulsion from paradise was, lest he should eat of the tree of life. And God would not have hindered him from acts of faith on the seed of the woman, which he had so lately promised and proposed to him as an object of faith.

But howsoever this be, there are two effects of the depravation of nature that are the causes of unbelief.

(1.) Darkness of the understanding, Eph. 4:18, whereby it is unable to see and judge of the spiritual objects presented to it, as the eye possessed by a beam is to exercise a visive faculty. Though a natural object hath such excellent qualities, that if it be understood, it will attract the will and affections to it, and open the arms of the other faculties for the embracing it; yet if the mind be ill disposed, and doth not judge of that object according to its merit, it will refuse it: as offer a man gold and diamonds, who understands not their worth, he will not be allured by them: a vitiated mind can as little behold the beauty of spiritual things, whereby to embrace them with satisfaction. There must be a concurrence of both the plainness of the object, and the clearness of the mind, for uniting them together. Though the sun shines in its glory in the firmament, yet if the eye be blind, there is no perception of it, or rejoicing in it.* As the apostle saith of the Jews, 'They would not have crucified the Lord of glory, had they known him,' 1 Cor. 2:8, so men would never reject the gospel, were they sensible of the excellency of it. What hinders them from seeing and acknowledging it but sin, which hath blinded their minds? as nothing hinders a man from admiring the brightness and lustre of the sun but the want of his eyes. Vain things are the objects the mind made vain by sin doth only understand, and such things it hunts after for satisfaction. Since it is alienated from the life of God, it perceives not the light of God. And this natural darkness is too

thick and powerful for the light or beams of the gospel which shine into it, without a spiritual illumination, and an opening the inward eye by the same almighty power, which can only restore the eye of the body when the light of it is wholly extinct: John 1:5, 'The light shined in darkness,' i.e. upon the dark minds of men, 'but the darkness comprehended it not.' From this darkness of mind springs that alienation from the life of God, or that life which we should live by the faith of the Son of God, Gal. 2:20; so that they do not desire the spirit of revelation, which can only open the eye, renew them in their minds, and make them capable of discerning the excellency of spiritual objects. When Adam was in innocence, he did not judge rightly of what he ought; there was a flaw in his understanding, whereby he did dissent from the truths of God's command. So the corruption of our nature is first and primarily in our understanding, and flows from thence into the lower faculties, as many diseases do from the head by catarrhs into the members of the body.

(2.) Perversity of will, whereby it withstands the impressions of truth, and beats them back, as the hardness of a wall doth the ball flung against it,* and runs as much counter to the will of God's mercy, whereby he would gratify us, as to the will of his authority, whereby he would have us serviceable to him. This is expressed by the apostle in the same place: Eph. 4:18, 'Through the blindness of their hearts ($\pi\acute{\omega}\rho\omega\sigma\iota\nu$).' The word translated blindness, signifies properly a callousness or hardness, and it is so translated, Mark 6:52, 'They considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened;' and John, 12:40, where the hardness of the heart, which is expressed by this word, is distinguished from the blindness of their eyes. There is a callousness and brawniness in their heart, whereby it is rendered insensible of spiritual mysteries. The enmity to God is seated in the will; it is seated by the apostle in the mind, Rom. 8:7; it is indeed radically there, as liberty is, but formally in the will. We cannot be said to be enemies to any with our understanding, but in regard of prejudices, principles, wrong notions, which give birth and breeding to that aversion we have in the will to anything; and the Scripture lays our not coming to Christ upon the obstinacy and

inflexibleness of our wills altogether; which is evident in that when God hath expressed himself in the most indulgent manner, offering those blessings which man in his lapsed condition is in absolute need of, which his own reason in some measure informs him he wants, and when his own heart tells him in his retirements he can have no true acquiescence in anything below; yet there is a backwardness to entertain the gospel with choice affections, a refusal of that with contempt which should be entertained with joy; not only an indisposition in the will to receive it, but a contrary disposition and stout-heartedness against it, which makes them 'far from righteousness,' Isa. 46:12; a love of darkness, and resistance of light; that though the word be in part understood, the heart is not presently converted. The chains of sin are affected by the soul, it resists Christ when he comes to file them off, loves the bondage of the one better than the service of the other. 'It is 'desperately wicked,' Jer. 17:9; it hates Christ for speaking the truth, for pressing a return to God; it desires not the knowledge of God's ways, and likes not to retain God in its knowledge. From this depravation of the will it is that the gospel meets with the greatest opposition when it first sets footing in a place, or is presented to a person; as there is the greatest cold in a morning (say some) about the time of the rising sun, because the vapours exhaled are resisted by the sunbeams, which, being not powerful enough to conquer and dispel them, do accidentally unite and strengthen them. So all the sin in man's heart rouseth and arms itself against that gospel which would destroy it.

2. Insensibleness of our state is another cause of unbelief. A congealed soul can no more receive the gospel, than frozen flesh can take in salt, whereby it may be preserved. The Pharisees would not believe but that they could clearly see, though they were absolutely blind: John 9:40, 'Are we blind also?'

(1.) Insensibleness of our lapsed condition, and the miseries attending it. We have a notion of the fall of man, the propagation of his corruption to us by generation; but the notion in our minds, and a suitable impression upon our hearts, do not meet together: our

heads and hearts are at a greater distance in regard of the influence of the one upon the other in this case, than the heavens from the earth. If we understood the deplorableness of it, it were impossible but we should seek for a remedy; and when we can find no other to satisfy our curiosity, we should acquiesce in the way of the gospel as the fullest, safest, and most gratifying medicine. The physician is not valued when sickness is not felt; when we understand not ourselves 'poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked,' it is no wonder that we account the gospel foolishness; and no man can do any other till he feelingly understand what he lost, and what he contracted, by Adam. This was the great obstacle in the Jews; they so prided themselves in their noble extraction from Abraham, that they never remembered they were the offspring of Adam: John 8:33, 'We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?' Do we sensibly understand how much we have incurred the displeasure of the Lord, defeated the end of our creation, enslaved ourselves to vile lusts, subjected ourselves to the devil, the most desperate rebel against God, and the incendiary of the world? Are we sensible how by Adam's transgression of the precept, we, as well as himself, are exposed to all the curses of the law, become guilty before God, as full of a stout enmity against that God we have offended, as we are full of a thick ignorance how to work out our reconciliation with him? Are we sensible that we lie in our blood, are estranged from the life of God and holiness of God, possessed by a carnal mind and a perverse will, overgrown with poisonous weeds in our nature, and jolly with that sin which is the cause of our misery? These are the things the apostle preacheth, Rom. 3, before he insists on the doctrine of faith, intimating that the only way to faith was a due impression of that wretched condition by nature; and the great cause of unbelief is an insensibleness or inconsideration of it; and Christ intimates in that sweet exhortation, Mat. 11:28, 'Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden,' that men must feel the weight and load of the curses of the law, before they will have recourse to the refreshments of the gospel.

(2.) Insensibleness of the severity of God's justice. We fancy a God made up only of mercy, without reminding ourselves of his wrath, and think that, because he hath put bowels into creatures, he hath nothing but bowels in himself to the worst of rebels. Are we sensible of the steadiness of his truth to the word of his threatening, the dearness of his honour to him, and the dreadfulness of his wrath? Will God make a nullity of his own threatening, bear the affronts of his creatures, suffer the honour of his law to lie without regard in the dust; let the creature triumph in rebellion, and add to his former ingratitude new darings of heaven? How can we forget to mind the punishment due to our sin? How can we think the great God, the pattern of all excellency in his creatures, can be guilty of that weakness and falseness to his own honour as to break his word, and that his justice so heinously provoked, presently after his goodness had put his creature into a condition of serving him, as well as arming against him, should tamely put up the injury? Yet this is the true cause of unbelief; we consider not the power of his wrath (Ps. 90:11, 'Who knows the power of his anger?'), believe him not to be a consuming fire, and understand not the greatness of his anger in such a measure as it is to be feared.

(3.) Insensibleness of our own insufficiency to free us from this miserable condition, and the necessity of some other remedy than what our own nature, or all other human assistances, can furnish us with. Are we not naturally insensible that we have contracted a weakness of our satisfying one tittle of the law? that we can increase our debts and pay none, under an impossibility of remedying ourselves, or proposing a remedy to our offended Creator? Alas! we neither feel our wants nor know how to find supplies. We cannot satisfy that justice we have provoked, nor content that holiness we have displeased. We know not how to reduce ourselves to that God from whom we have wandered, nor regain that heaven we have forfeited. It is as impossible for us to find a place of rest, to which we might invite our souls to return, as it was for the dove sent out of the ark to find a place where to set her foot while the waters were upon the earth. This kind of inconsiderateness was the cause of the Jews'

unbelief; they rested in the shell of their sacrifices, their outward washings, and purifications, and lifeless ceremonies, which had as little ability to bring them to God, as by nature they had a will to come to him: John 5:45, 'Moses, in whom you trust.' They trusted not in the person of Moses, but in the doctrine delivered, and ordinances enjoined, by Moses. What sinful or innocent creature hath so much power or favour as to interpose for us? Can any man be able to answer the just demands of the law, or stop the cries of it, by bearing the punishment it requires? Can we remove the loads of our guilt, and stifle the cries of our innumerable sins against us? If we consider the nature and circumstances of sin, the nature of the majesty offended, should we not be sensible that no created strength was able to pay our debts, or bear our punishment and secure our standing? But we are insensible of this; we naturally think a few outward devotions, a pack of legal services, glavering prayers, and heartless reformations, can make God a compensation for all the affronts he hath sustained from us, retrieve our loss, and uncloud the face of God; and we apprehend not how sin hath mastered our faculties, and rendered them impotent to any perfect obedience, and unable to effect the everlasting redemption we absolutely need.

It is this, then, is another cause of unbelief. We believe not that we sprang from Adam, or else we believe not that Adam was so putrefied a root as the Scripture represents him to us. And how can the second Adam appear beautiful to any who is not sensible of the deformity of the first, and his own filthiness by him? Who would look for an eye-salve, that believed himself perfect in the organs of sight, or search for a treasure, who thinks he hath wealth enough already by him? The want of conviction by the law is the cause of the want of conversion to the gospel. We know not the disease, and therefore we regard not the remedy. Had we due apprehensions of this, we should be restless till we had an account of some salvation from it, to escape the wrath of God which is due to such a state. Let each man of us, therefore, in our private retirements, fancy ourselves in the stead of Adam, each woman of us in the state of Eve, and consider what we should have thought after God's conferring a being upon us with so

much honour, our committing an offence with so much heinousness, and the terrors of conscience, and fears of punishment felt in ourselves. If we had a full sense, as they had, of the blessedness they had lost, the misery they had contracted, with what affectionate devotion and greediness should we enclose in the arms of our souls the offended Redeemer, with all his conditions! as no question they did the promise of the redeeming seed, which could only pacify their lately offended Creator, and calm their stormy consciences.

8. Pride of corrupted reason. Hence ariseth the opposition to, and slight of, the gospel, in great wits and the princes of the wisdom of this world. They cannot believe anything which hath not some affinity with the false principles rooted in their minds, nor with the interest of their wills and passions. They contemn the revelations of God, because they are not suited to the opinions and notions of decrepit nature. The disproportion of the truths of the gospel to the principles of the received philosophy, made the Greeks count it foolishness in regard of the design of the sufferings of Christ, which had not entered into the heads of any of the masters of their sects, 1 Cor. 1:23.

(1.) This was the cause of the Jews' opposition to Christ. As the Greeks expected a doctrine savouring of the wisdom of their philosophy, so the Jews expected a Messiah with a magnificent retinue; and therefore the preaching of a crucified Christ was a scandal to them, because of the ignominy of the cross, contrary to the reason or fancy whereby they conducted themselves in the expectation of him. And the greatest wits among them, the pharisees, dashed upon this rock, John 9:40, 'Are we blind also?' We know the common people are ignorant, but will you charge us with ignorance of the mind and will of God, who are so far above their rank? But, ver. 40, Christ tells them, because they boasted of their wisdom, their sin, i.e. their unbelief, remained. The pride of their knowledge was the mother and nurse of their incredulity. The opinion of the excellency of the law given by Moses, above any revelation whatsoever, fixed them in this sin. They always fenced against the

edge of Christ's and the apostles' discourses with their arrogant brags of Moses: John 9:28, 'We are Moses his disciples.' 'We know that God spake unto Moses.' The great doctors of that nation deride the Son of God, while the people adore him; the insolent disciples of Moses condemn him as a seducer and a partner with Beelzebub, while the simple-hearted receive him as the great prophet and son of David, and submit their reasons to the declarations of God; the wise men of the Jews crucify him, while the wise men of the east, the shepherds of Bethlehem, with the wisest creatures in heaven, the angels, rejoice and worship him.* Men swelled up with an opinion of their science, are unfit for faith. This is one of the strongholds exalting itself against the knowledge of God. The babes, and not the wise and prudent men, conceited of their natural wit, have, by the grace of God, the fullest store of the mysteries of the gospel, while he lets others fall, by the subtleties of a proud knowledge, into the snares of the devil. They will not believe, lest they should incur a censure of folly, imprudence, and credulity, though they have a rational ground of believing.

(2.) No question but this is a secret let in many among us. Though they cannot in reason deny the being of such a person as Jesus, cannot but own his miracles, life, death, and the wonders wrought by the apostles, because the testimonies of them are undeniable. Such as believe not this, must believe nothing, not that there is such a country as Spain, East Indies, America, which they never saw; nor believe that there were such persons as Alexander and Cæsar, which were conquerors of nations, which they have only by report; since there are more evidences that there was such a person as Christ, such doctrines taught, such miracles wrought, confessed by the enemies of the Christian religion among the heathen, and to this day by the Jews. But their reasons are nonplussed in the doctrine how Christ should be the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, that the divine and human nature should be so miraculously united without confusion of properties, how an innocent person should die for offenders, that God would not pardon by a free act of grace without a satisfaction, that he should exact it of his Son, and by so

bitter a death as that of the cross. These things have no footing in the common received principles of rationalists; and men are loath to captivate their reasons to the obedience of faith.

But how unreasonable is this pride of reason, upon which the unbelief of many is founded! Because we can understand some things, are our reasons capable of everything? Are they as infinite and unlimited in their capacities as God himself? Do we not owe that respect to our Creator as to believe he might keep some things to be revealed at what time he pleased, and that the discovery of his infinite wisdom might exceed our scanty comprehensions? Would not such rational men skilled in astronomy, laugh at those that should measure the greatness of the sun, and moon, and stars by their eye? If sense be too weak to comprehend the things that belong to reason, may not reason be as much too weak to comprehend the things that belong to revelation? If there be some things above our sense, why may there not be as many things, or more, above our reason? A man's eye cannot behold that which an eagle's can. As reason cannot comprehend the unbounded essence of God, no more than a man, if he were near the sun, could grasp it in his arms, so neither can it comprehend all the revelations of God, no more than a man can enclose all the beams and emissions of the sun in his eye, the infinite wisdom of God being infinitely more above our reason than the sun can be above our sense. We have natural proofs that there is a God, but have we capacities to comprehend the infinite perfections of his nature? Can we understand the depths of his wisdom, the lustre of his holiness, the steadiness of his truth, his boundless immensity, and the abyss of his counsels? We know he is, and hath all this; but we know not how nor the manner of his acting. So we have rational proof that the Scripture is the word of God, that the Christian religion is the revelation of God; but shall we, therefore, think to span and measure all the discoveries of God in Christ? As the nature of God cannot, so neither can the actions or truths of God be grasped in our reason, no more than the waters of the ocean can be included in a nutshell. If men's reason will not own revelation till they understand the manner of all the truths revealed, they must be

unbelievers for ever. If they were admitted into heaven in that state, with as great a perfection of reason as Adam had, they could no more have a full view of those things than the angels have of God, who (we know) cover their faces before him; Isa. 6:2; 'His ways are above ours, his thoughts above ours,' and his wisdom infinitely above our reason, Isa. 55:8, 9. Besides, the natural light of the understanding is impaired by the fall (not to speak of the loss of that supernatural light man had), and men must not think to be as apprehensive and comprehensive of the reasons of things as if they were in innocence; as if any man could see things as clearly with a beam in his eye as he could if he had a clearness of sight and a fulness of spirits. Let us not think we can comprehend the revelations of God, till we can comprehend the nature of creatures. If men could fully understand the latter, yet those are but natural things, and will not infer that men can comprehend heavenly mysteries by earthly reason. Unbelief springs not from the incredibleness of the object, but the weakness of the eye, and a foolish opinion that it is clearer and sharper than it is. As in the text, the things were true which Christ spake concerning the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, i.e. believing in him; but their understandings were weak, and could not conceive of them as Christ meant them, and were more fond of that they esteemed reason, than ready to wait submissively upon him for further information, though they counted him a prophet sent from God, by reason of his miracles, which might have overruled their foolish imagination of his discourse.

(3.) This pride of reason is manifest in humbled persons at the beginning of a gracious work upon them. How ordinary is it for them to reason themselves from taking hold of the promise of life in Christ, find out witty inventions against the mercy of God, support their unbelief with pretences of unworthiness, wrest the promise to a contrary sense to what God intended it, as Manoah argued from the appearance of God that they should die, Judges 13:22, and indulge any ungrounded imagination against the promise of God! A corrupt nature, and a weak understanding, meeting with a doctrine so sublime, render us liable to mistake; as the weakness of our eye,

when the height of an object transcends it, is the reason of misconceptions. The transcendent excellency of the thing promised, being in itself so glorious, and the soul finding itself so vile, the proffer is as a dream to it, as the greatness of the deliverance was to Sion, Ps. 126:1. When men are soundly convinced of the nature and evil of sin, they become vile in their own eyes, their sin galls them, the law terrifies them, the notions of God's justice are awakened in them, and lie close to them; they are sensible of the degenerateness and rebellion of their nature; they think God cannot but hate them, and they expect from him only the severity of a judge; and when evangelical mercy is declared, it seems incredible to them, because it exceeds their nature and dispositions; the greatness of the mercy proffered, makes them stagger; they believe not God to be so merciful, because they cannot be so (for in all conditions of men, it is natural to limit God according to their own petty dimensions, and not elevate their thoughts to his, but judge of his thoughts by theirs); and although his mercy is above the mercy of a creature, we are apt to think his nature as incapable of a largeness as our own. Since man is become vain in his imaginations, he is apt to measure divine things according to those principles which are in his own fancy. Hence God calls to men to forsake their thoughts, their disparaging conceptions of him, since his thoughts were different from theirs, as much as the heavens from the earth, Isa. 55:7–9. He had higher thoughts of good to them, than either they had for themselves, or could think God had for them. Thus the greatness of the provision God promised the Israelites in the wilderness, made Moses his faith dizzy, he could not imagine how God should send food for such a vast number as six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, for the space of a month: Num. 11:21, 22, 'Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together, to suffice them?' The greatness of the thing dazzled his thoughts, which were not proportioned to the mighty power of God, and measured the infinite majesty by a created line. Such humbled persons are like the disciples, who believed not the resurrection of Christ for joy when he appeared among them, Luke 24:41; there was a twilight of faith, but obscured by the darkness of reason, the strugglings of this obstructed the victorious breaking out of the

other. They had known their Master dead, his heart pierced, his body buried, they thought they saw him now present among them; their joy sprang up at the sight, but they could not tell how to believe it was he, against so many natural sentiments which might start up in them. Thus poor souls, scorched by the apprehensions of the curse due to their sins, hearing the greatness of mercy, wish it were so great as it is reported; come after, upon a nearer approach to the object, to hope it is so. But as too great an object dissolves the spirits, the strength of the sense, as the lustre of the sun dims the eye, the greatness of the sound deafens the ear; so the transcendent excellency of the spiritual object overpowers the understanding. It is this, therefore, puts God to his oath, that as he lives he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, Ezek. 33:11; it was after an objection made by them, ver. 10, that if their transgressions were upon them, and they pine away in them, how should they then live? It is by an oath too that he settles our high priest, that we might have a strong consolation, which our scanty and suspicious natures, when once awakened, would scarce admit of. All this doth arise from a fondness of our own reason, or rather rooted imaginations exalting themselves against the wisdom of God, and a natural corruption whereby man is desirous to darken the glory of God. To produce, therefore, and excite faith, to quell and conquer unbelief, let us look only to the word, as God sends them to the word who measured the thoughts of God by their own: Isa. 55:11, 'So shall my word be that goes forth of my mouth;' consult not flesh and blood; follow not the ignis fatuus of our own corrupted reason, a thing compacted only of earthly vapours. He that seduced the reason of Adam, when it was innocent, will much more be able to mislead ours when depraved and filled with a thousand follies. Let all our whys and wherefores be subjected to the word.

4. A self-fulness and conceit of ability, high opinions of other things, and resting upon them. This was a bane of the Jews, an outward observance, a bodily compliance with the commands of God; they thought enough to bear them out before his exact tribunal. This was the righteousness of the pharisees, which Christ would have ours

exceed, Mat. 5:20; this was the righteousness the Jews pursued, whereby they missed of the other, Rom. 9:31, 32. Their seeking after righteousness by the works of the law, hindered their pursuit of it in a way of faith.

Two things are to be considered in this:

(1.) Reliance upon outward privileges. The Jews bolstered up their hopes by their pompous worship, their circumcision, the law and ceremonies prescribed immediately by God to Moses, privileges granted by God to no nation under heaven besides, Ps. 147:19, 20; and upon the account of those, never left till they had brought the Messiah to the cross and grave. As they had before resisted the prophets who called them to the observation of the moral law above the ceremonial, and commanded them to offer their hearts more than their sacrifices to God, they dreamed of a justification by them, and forgot the kernel. There were four names possessed the minds of the Jews: *People; they thought God was so bound to the seed of Abraham, and that his seed was so holy by the holiness of their ancestors, that it was impossible for God to reject them, and choose another people. The law; that they thought was so pleasing to God, that whosoever observed it, was by that acceptable to God, and righteous before him; hence it is that they so often boast of and oppose their circumcision, and being the seed of Abraham, against the prophets, Christ, and the apostles. The temple; they imagined that God had fixed his perpetual habitation in the material temple, and was so delighted with the stateliness and richness of that edifice, that he could not be persuaded upon any account to desert it, and choose a place of worship anywhere else: Jer. 7:4, 'Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.' They trusted in the temple as the preservative of the city, and the security of the nation from judgments, and therefore they constantly cried up the temple of the Lord, against the threatenings by the prophets. Land of Canaan; they imagined this land so delightful to God that he could not endure to be worshipped in any other territory; and fancied that God was so

tied to that order of priesthood among them, that he would never suffer them to err; and therefore boasted that the law should not perish from the priest, nor the word of the Lord from the prophet. This is the veil which is upon their hearts to this day, and darkens their eyes from beholding the excellency of the gospel, and the true interpretation of the design and meaning of their ceremonies. They thought it enough to sacrifice their oxen, kindle their incense, observe their feasts, and hold up their hands to heaven, though filled with blood. Is not man as apt now to pin his hopes upon modes of worship, the baptismal laver, lukewarm devotions, as if those indeed did propitiate God, wipe off their guilt, and secure their souls, thus making those things which are means, to be ends, centres, foundations of blessedness? Do not the papists at this day depend upon their sacrifice of the mass, the treasures, intercessions, yea, the carcasses, bones, rags of the deceased saints, pilgrimages to shrines and sepulchres, as if those were expiations of sin and satisfactions of justice, the rod of their strength, which is an impediment to their settling their faith and confidence only in Christ!

(2.) Upon moral virtues. How many imagine that because of the good things found in them, God cannot but receive them, though they set not their faces toward, nor fix their eyes on Christ? They think they have no need of the benefits of a Redeemer. Who will look after the righteousness of another, when he thinks he hath enough in his own chest to carry him out, he hath enough in his own bag to supply his wants? Those that think they have no need of Christ, will cast him at their heels. There are two sorts, wherein this natural confidence in a self-fitness appears: such who exalt their own righteousness, and think themselves too good to have any need of Christ; and such who, after some conviction, think themselves not good enough to come to Christ. One is so proud he will not be beholden to him, because he hath a portion of his own; the other is so proud, that he will not be beholden to him till he can bring something of a valuable consideration; for that he expects to receive from him some box of ointment to pour upon him; both which proceed from a natural stout-heartedness against God. We would be Christ's partners, not

his almsmen, as if we envied him the sole glory of our justification. Paul laid the whole weight of his soul upon the slender beam of his own righteousness while he was a Jew in religion; but when he became a Christian, it was then, 'Not I, but the grace of God in me.' His circumcision, his being of the stock of Israel, of the sect of the pharisees, and his righteousness in the law (all which he terms flesh), were his gain before, but accounted his loss afterwards, Philip. 3:4–7. And the reason of this is the ignorance of the perfection of that righteousness which God requires, that his holiness cannot endure a spot, that thousands of services and moral excellencies cannot make a recompence for one sin; they understand not the exactness of God's justice, the extent of the law in its precepts, nor the dreadfulness of it in its curses; they understand not the nature of sin to be so great as to need an atonement by the blood of God, or their righteousness to be so foul as to need a covering before the holiness of God. If they have not a notorious stench in their lives, they regard not the noisomeness of the fumes in their hearts. A trusting in any fleshly excellency is a cause of departing from God, Jer. 17:5, a robbing God of the credit we ought to give to him. While we would make our own peace, hew a prop out of our own rock, we shall never value, or place our trust in, the Redeemer.

5. Affectation of worldly things. When Israel was grown fat and plump, he 'lightly esteemed,' or disgraced, 'the rock of his salvation,' Deut. 32:15, ישועתו, his rock Jesus. The Spirit of truth, which engenders faith in the heart, 'the world cannot receive,' John 14:17; men of worldly principles and worldly affections. The whole world followed antichrist, Rev. 13:3; not only the world in regard of multitude, but in regard of the cause; men whose hearts were linked to the world, and thirsted after a worldly grandeur. As the devil is the god of this world, he blinds the eyes of men that believe not, 'lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them,' 2 Cor. 4:4. Not understanding that natural blindness which all men derive from Adam, but some additional blindness contracted by his means, as he was the god of this world; not physically, by quenching the light of their minds, but morally, by presenting to them some false image

of the world in its allurements or affrightments, whereby they were hindered from acknowledging the truth of the gospel, though clear in itself, and resplendent as the light. He is called the god of this world, not by right of possession, but as making use of the things of this world to propagate and maintain his empire in the hearts of men; by those, he bemists their understandings not to know the Redeemer.

Two things of the world are the roots of this sin.

[1.] The riches of the world, the objects of covetousness. The pharisees, which were covetous, derided him after he had preached a searching sermon against it, Luke 16:14. What made the young man turn his back upon our Saviour, after some fair show of a willingness to be his disciple, but the love of his possessions? Why did the Gadarenes pray him to depart out of their coasts, but that they loved better to remain with the devil than to live without their swine? What restrained the invited guests from accepting the dainties provided for them, but the immoderate affection to the husbanding a farm, and proving of oxen? Mat. 22:5. Why did the third ground so easily part with the word? Because they valued the profits and pleasures of the world above the happiness it proposed. And why did the Jews prosecute Christ to death, but because they feared the Romans should come and take away their kingdom? And what was the reason then, is no less a reason now; when the heart is stuffed up with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. Whoever is under the government of this lust, can no more believe than a man lying under a heap of rubbish, or at the bottom of the sea, can see the glory of the heavens. The intentness of the eye upon one object hinders it from the view of another, and that may be more excellent. When men hunt after the wealth of this world, they will hardly gasp for the riches of another. They would make Christ a happiness, by the by, when other things fail.

[2.] The honours of the world, the objects of ambition. This was and is still the root of the Jews' opposition to Christ. They dressed up a Messiah in their fancies, with the accoutrements of a gallant general

at the head of his troops, by his conquering sword to make them lords of the world, and all other nations their slaves; and being full of those vain-glorious hopes upon his coming, they were so enraged against the person of Christ, because the meanness of his appearance did not gratify their carnal expectations of grandeur. And though he wrought many great miracles as testimonies of his commission, whereby their judgments might have been swayed to a belief of him, yet he not having that good they conceited, they rejected that good he proposed. The meanness of his person was the occasion of their contempt; he appeared as a despicable shrub, Isa. 53:2, 'as a root out of a dry ground,' giving no marks of rising to a full-grown tree, to shadow that nation from the fury of their conquerors: 'he hath no form nor comeliness;' there is no comeliness like that of the Messiah we expect, nor that splendour, wherein he seems to be promised. There is neither the grandeur of the world in his person, nor the eloquence of the world in his preaching. His discourse and practice was to cast contempt and scorn upon it: he allured them not with the sensual delights of the world. The corner-stone is therefore rejected, because it squared not with that fabric of worldly greatness and wealth they had erected. Had he promised them the pleasures of this life, assured them they should set their feet upon the necks of their enemies, the whole nation had listed themselves in his troops. They cracked none of the promises to taste their spiritual sweetness; fed only upon the husk, and never regarded sin, or any deliverance from it. This stakes them down in their unbelief to this day; their eyes cannot pierce to the spiritual things veiled under temporal promises; they are so fond of the shell that they neglect the kernel; and though they have seen their desires and hopes frustrated beyond the time fixed by any of the prophets, yet this dazzling expectation flatters them out of any thoughts of a Redeemer, but what is framed according to their own model. What was that which made the disciples flag in their faith after the death of Christ? The thoughts that Christ was to redeem them, not from the tyranny of sin, but the usurpation of the Romans. When they saw him dead, their hopes were crucified and buried with him: Luke 24:21, 'We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.' Now they had no

trust left. What made some of the rulers (when they could not in their judgments resist the force of the miracles) silence their confession of him, but the 'loving the praise of men more than the praise of God'? John 12:42, 43; and our Saviour tells them, 'John 5:44, that one passionately affected to vain-glory doth not only not believe, but cannot believe; it is not possible, while he is so disposed, that he should pay to Christ any thing but a disdain. Ambition and faith cannot join hands together; for faith humbles, and ambition puffs up; faith glorifies God, and pride magnifies itself. None that make their reputation their god, can endure anything which they suppose will blemish it, and expose them to the scorn of the brave spirits of their age.

We see then another cause of unbelief. 'Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble,' 1 Cor. 1:26. Not many wise, because they will not submit their reasons; not many mighty, δυνατοὶ, or rich, because they will not be weaned from their worldliness; not many noble, because they will not sacrifice their honour. Pride and covetousness have taken possession of the noblest parts of them; pride of the understanding, and covetousness of the will. If we are biassed by both, or either of those, we are as much deriders of Christ in heart as the Pharisees were in their lies and gestures, Luke 16:14, ἐξεμυκτήριζον; and we can no more believe in him now, if ruled by those principles, than they did then who beheld the glory of his miracles; they are both bars against any gospel faith, howsoever clear the truth shines in the midst of men.

6. Sensuality and corrupt habits settled in the soul. The fleshly interest hath produced evil habits, and strengthened them in the souls of men; they become natural to them, and men are loath to be divorced from them. 'Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, John 3:19; they are loath to see the vileness and ugliness of their sins, as some are loath to behold the disfigurement of their faces. Let light, the most excellent thing in the world, glare upon one that hath sore eyes, he will shut his eyes against it, or turn away from it; though he understands the worth of it, yet it is a quality

offensive to him in those circumstances. As the gospel is too clear for a darkened mind, so it is too pure for depraved affections; as men are wedded to this or that particular vice, they are estranged from the doctrine and purity of the gospel. Those passions are dearer to them than truth and goodness, they blear the eyes of their mind that they cannot behold them, weaken the intention of the mind that it cannot pursue the apprehension of them, and arm the powers of the soul in opposition to them. Appetite imposeth upon the judgment. As there is a conjunction or opposition between men's carnal affections and points to be believed,* so is there an assent or dissent from them. If there be anything in any part of the gospel which they can wrest to favour their darling lust, they will esteem it as a sweet and delightful voice. But when Christ offers to make them happy,† only he will take away their vice; this they cannot endure; they will take their leave of Christ, and love rather to live without him, than without the swine which they idolise, Mat. 8:34. They would depend on his sacrifice, but cheer themselves with their pleasures; they would be saved by his cross, but ruled by their lusts; they would part the offices of Christ, which God hath joined together, not to be separated for the pleasure of the rebellious creature; they would lay hold on his promises, but not observe his precepts; and have a faith of reliance without a faith of resignation. To follow the conduct of our affections hinders a conduct by the understanding, and consequently believing, since faith is an intellectual act. The harp and the viol in the feasts hinder any regard to the 'operations of God's hands,' Isa. 5:12, any serious reflections on the designs of his providence in the world; much more any sentiments of Christ, the sum and centre of all his providences. Corrupt affections cloud the understanding, as vapours from the stomach dim the eye. They are like coloured glasses, changing the species of the object which is seen through them; ill judgments of good things are engendered by them, because contrary to those vicious habits which are rooted in them.

7. The devil. As the devil opposes the kingdom of Christ, so he opposeth that which is the great prop of that kingdom. As he would make Christ doubt whether he were the Son of God, so he would

make us doubt whether he were sent of God. The devil's sin seems to be a rejecting of Christ as head, and therefore he endeavours to conform men to his own image by unbelief, as God conforms his own to the image of his Son by faith; and this contempt is so properly the devil's image, that he is said to work more particularly in opposition to Christ in the first times of the gospel: Eph. 2:2, 'Now works in the children of disobedience.' Now that a crucified Saviour is preached as head of the world, now that the Spirit works in men to draw the lineaments of a divine faith, and restore them by it to the happiness they have lost, so Satan works to hinder faith, that he might perpetuate men in that state to which he at first reduced them; for he knows there is no way of recovery but by faith; there is no way to happiness but by a perfect obedience commensurate to every tittle of the law, or a satisfaction for the breach of it; the first we cannot perform, because we have offended; the second we cannot do by ourselves, because we are creatures. God proposed not the way of working to Adam for his repair after the fall, but that of believing in the seed of the woman. If the devil, then, can keep us from faith, he keeps us under his own empire, because there is no other means but faith of settling us under another head. Besides, by keeping us from this, he keeps us from paying any obedience to God. Without this grace we can do nothing but sin, Heb. 11:6; and with it we may pay him some poor kind of obedience in our own persons, and glorify him in owning the obedience of another which he hath exposed to suffering in our stead. Faith is all the weapons a man can have to resist him, 1 Peter 5:9. He therefore will endeavour to hinder us from it, or disarm us of it. If he cannot prevent it, he lays siege to batter it; he will second the perverse reasonings we make against the grace of God, and stake down the imagination to him. When we are in the dregs of nature, he makes us believe our state is good; when we are looking out of the pit, and begin to consider the proffers of Christ, and the glory of another world, he stirs up an awakened conscience, presents God as an armed enemy, and casts veils upon the merciful bowels of God. As he sowed jealousies of God in the heart of Adam, and endeavoured to plant suspicions of God in the heart of our Saviour, Mat. 4, so he kindles and blows up ill apprehensions of God

in the hearts of men. All have a tendency to nuzzle them in good conceits of themselves, and either to allure or bar them from faith in the Redeemer.

IV. Use.

1. How lamentable is this frequency of unbelief! Is it not an astonishment that the devil should find such strong inclinations in us to his kingdom and our own misery, and Christ so little dispositions to his own glory and our own happiness; that we should rather choose to die slaves in the chains of the devil, than to live gloriously in the bosom of a Saviour; that the Redeemer should be so willing to shed his blood, and men's nature so averse from accepting it, upon conditions as much advantageous for their own happiness as the Redeemer's glory? Are not all the good things we enjoy from his mediation—whatsoever natural light we have in our minds, whatsoever good motions start up in our wills? Is it not a thing to be bewailed, to be ignorant of him who is the procurer of such benefits? Like the inhabitants of Egypt, who enjoy the streams of Nilus, and the fruitfulness of their land thereby, and know not from what spring the river doth first arise. If faith were a rich manor, a wedge of gold, or a Babylonish garment, exhortations to it would be needless, the desires of men would outstrip one another in the gain of it. Doth not everything besides man obey Christ's voice; did not the winds, seas, diseases, hear his voice, and march or stand still, at his pleasure; and shall we only, who have reason to obey him, use our reasons to rebel against him; we who are capable of believing in him, refuse a real and practical credit to his word? Is it not sad, that many that profess a kindness to him should hate him worse than their sins, worse than their spiritual tyrant? Christ himself wonders, that when he 'told them the truth,' they did not believe, John 8:46; when he made not only a simple declaration, but demonstrated it by many signs, a truth of the greatest moment which respected a blessed eternity! Thus it was when his divinity, shining through his miraculous actions, might have persuaded men to receive his doctrine with veneration; but not only the obstinate sort rejected him, but some of his followers in the

text; and they are offended at his discourse, when they should rather have charged their own ignorance. His miracles might well have persuaded them there must be a divine meaning in what he proposed, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, though their understandings were at present too short to comprehend it. Is the world at a better pass now? Are the inclinations of men more natural towards Christ than in that age wherein he lived? Do they not rather seem to vie with Christ's voluntariness in undertaking redemption, by their wilful disdain of the conditions of it? Why should not that gospel, which hath been successful in many ages, in some of all conditions, be received in all the terms of it? Why should not his truth move us more, who have been bred and nourished among Christians? Why should they affect us no more than fables? It is lamentable that Christ, after so many proofs, miracles, and grace, cannot be believed but by a few; that most should prostitute themselves to vile temptations, let a Saviour stand without, while they are playing the wantons with the roysting mates in their hearts; as if the mercies he offered, were his crimes rather than his kindness, and he wronged us by shedding his blood for us.

2. See the madness and folly of men under the gospel. What an indifferency there is in many men whether they should believe or no! What folly would it be for any to be indifferent whether he should accept of life when he might have it upon honourable terms; to be indifferent whether they should be saved or no? Is it not a folly in us, and a high crime against God, to be so hardly brought to honour him in that way wherein he hath honoured himself, and would advantage us? Yet this is the folly of many men, yea, of most men. Is not that man worse than brutish, that believes sin damnable, and yet is fond of it; that believes God righteous, and yet offends him; that believes God good, and yet abuseth him; that believes Christ a Saviour, and yet honours him neither in heart nor life? Pretences are vain, if practice be not accommodated to them. Such believe none of those things, they believe not God good or righteous, sin damnable, or Christ a necessary Saviour; they drive on to hell, and turn their backs

upon the only Redeemer, as if they envied themselves a happiness, and Christ the honour of their salvation.

3. Let us examine ourselves whether we be true believers or no. 'Prove whether you are in the faith,' 2 Cor. 13:5. Much faith is counterfeit; the colour and flame of fire may be so represented by the art of man, that at a distance it may deceive our eye, but upon an approach to it, and touching of it, we shall find nothing of the quality of fire. Faith must be examined by the effects and fruits; what displeasure with sin, what affection to Christ, what flames in the heart, what regulation of the life? Let no man take his outward honesty and morality to be faith; there may be much of that where there is nothing of this. No reason to account all infidels that have been rebels to Christ, and fools to themselves, to be false to men. We may well suppose those in the text to be no debauched persons, they had then forsaken Christ before, when he dissected, in several discourses, the gross lusts of the world. Many civil persons may be without a knowledge of the true intent, ends, and conditions of the coming of Christ; they may own the person of Christ, and oppose the Spirit of Christ, as well as the Jews owned the shadow of Christ, and opposed the substance; acknowledged the types, and refused the antitype. Try your faith by your love to Christ and his truth. It is the common sentiment of men, that whatsoever thing a man counts his sovereign good, he doth necessarily love, and it is impossible he should do otherwise.* Men differ in their choice; one chooseth pleasure, another honour, another wealth, some an image of moral virtue; but, let it be what it will, the affections follow it. If any man be convinced that God is the chiefest good, that Christ is the only Redeemer, in whose death is our life, in whose resurrection is our justification, and that this Redeemer can only bring us to the enjoyment of God, our chiefest good, then the setting our chiefest love upon God the centre, upon Christ as the means, is unavoidable. If we believe those things really, it is as certain that we shall love God supremely; and our love to Christ as the way, would be equal to the desires of the enjoyment of God as the end. If there were many means to bring us to it, there might be a debate which to pitch upon.

But if we believe there is but one, and that Christ is this true and living way, that necessity which determines our love to the sovereign good, will carry us to affect, and follow, and pursue the only means to bring us to the fruition of it. If a man were desperately sick, and knew of but one medicine to cure him, and believed the cure certain upon the application, the love that he hath to his health would make him affect and value the only means to procure it. Do our hearts come under the influence and authority of the gospel? are the counsels of God esteemed and treated by us as the greatest wisdom? are the conditions of it entertained with readiness? do we rejoice in the light and flames of it? do we stifle those fleshly suggestions that would choke the appearance of it in our hearts, or stop us from obeying the precepts of it in our lives? Is the person, death, resurrection, yoke of Christ precious to us? 1 Peter 2:7; have we works of faith as well as the professions of it? would we obedient to his commands, as well as interested in the happiness of his promises? John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.' Can we deny ourselves for him, our right hand or right eye, whatsoever is dearest to us? offer up the most affected corruption we have, to be crucified by the power of his cross? These are the operations of faith. But is it so, that we have a confidence in the flesh? that we are fond of a righteousness of our own, or indulgent to some secret lust, and would rather break with Christ than break with either? are we unwilling to come up to the terms of Christ? we would accept some but refuse others; is there anything more savoury to us than Christ? have we higher valuations of the things of the world than of him? are we content he should bear the divine wrath for us, but we would not imitate his divine righteousness, or leave some endeared lust for him? would we have his salvation, but put off the service of him to the dregs of our lives, when we cannot serve ourselves? would we only serve our turn of him, but pay no service to him? do we like his sacrifice and dislike his service, love the sweetness of his cross, but not the weight of his yoke? would we have the benefit of redemption with a liberty of sinning, make the gospel the ground of our confidence, but not the rule of our walk? While our wills are thus unconquered, we are

unbelievers. No man believes, that hath not a bended will to Christ, even to his very feet. Our neglects of him render us guilty of this sin, as well as our oppositions to him. The guests invited to the feast, did not absolutely refuse to come, but made their excuses: Mat. 22:5, they 'made light of it;' ἀμελήσαντες, were careless of it. What society hath faith with profaneness or a resolution of disobedience? 'What agreement hath Christ with Belial?' There are but two standards to come under, Christ's or Satan's; Christ is only the public head appointed by God. Who do we fight for? He that is not with him is against him; he that is not with him by a gracious will, holy desires, affectionate valuations, holy meditations, resolutions to cleave to him, is against him, and no believer in him. No man can be in league with Christ and the devil at the same time. As Christ said to the Jews, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham,' John 8:39; so if we are Christ's followers, we shall do the works of Christ; works of obedience to him, and imitation of him.

4. Use is of exhortation.

(1.) Let us endeavour to be stripped of our unbelief. The least thing we can be obliged unto, upon any declaration of God, is the belief of it; an assent to the truth, and consent to the goodness. The law of nature teacheth us, that every revelation of God is to be believed as true, and embraced as good. We are as much bound to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him because of his goodness. What can be more reasonable than to turn to God, trust in him, accept of a righteousness from him, that we may be freed from guilt, and glorify his name? The owning the Christian religion (supposing there were reasons to doubt of the truth of it), and a faith in Christ cannot render a man worse than he was before. All confess the necessity of an holy life, the approbations of it they have in their consciences. But what infidel can say his life is agreeable in every particular to the dictates of his conscience, and to the law of nature in him? what infidel can imagine he may appear before God with confidence upon the account of his own works, who knows he hath not paid a tribute to him according to his law, according to his own sentiments of God?

Though he accounts God kind, because he sees the tokens of his goodness in the world, yet he must account him just, who sometimes sees the arrows of his vengeance darted in the world. If he hopes to be happy by the mercy of God, is he ever the further from it by believing in Christ as the way of communicating that mercy? The satisfaction he thinks to make to God by a righteousness of his own, his own conscience, if he will silently hear it, will tell him is not perfect; is he ever the further from perfection by accepting of the satisfaction Christ offers him in the word, which hath so many marks of a divine stamp upon it, as may easily stagger him; is the righteousness he builds upon impaired by it, or not rather advanced to higher strains of love to God, desires to glorify him, referring all to the Creator, whereby his own righteousness (though not thereby satisfactory to God, or to be rested on, yet) is rendered more agreeable to his own conscience, and more contenting to himself? Faith in Christ impairs nothing that a man's conscience, upon just ground, can call good and comely. But as for those who believe the doctrine of the gospel, there is much more reason they should really have that faith they pretend to. We confess God hath appointed no other to be the Redeemer, why should we not believe it with our hearts and affections, as well as confess it with our lips? Shall he who we believe is advanced by the Father above the highest heavens, be set lowest in our hearts? As there is but one God we must own, so there is but one priest, one sacrifice we must rely upon, one king whom we must obey. Pray therefore against your unbelief. As we need a Christ to free us from the curse, so we need the Spirit to open our eyes, that we may see our misery, the attainableness of happiness, and the way to it, and that we may acknowledge all those admirable qualities and suitableness in the Son of God to all our necessities. We have as great an impotency to faith without grace, as we have an emptiness of it by nature; there is such an estrangedness from God, such an aversion to him, that not a man in the world would ever turn to God without an overpowering grace. No man is an unbeliever but because he will be so; and every man is not an unbeliever, because the grace of God conquers some, changeth their wills, and bends them to Christ. Every man's heart is by nature of the

same metal and temper; no man is more pliant than another, but by the fire of grace melting him. Pray for it; God never denied it to any wrestler with him; he knows how to give good things to them that ask him, and are importunate for them. Pray for it as for your daily bread; wait upon the means where grace pours forth itself. Lie at the foot of the throne of grace for this necessary grace, and study much the guilt of sin, the deformity of your souls by it, the extent of the law, the justice of God, and the satisfaction of Christ in the gospel.

(2.) Let believers be ashamed both of their old unbelief and the remainders of it in their hearts. Let us reflect upon ourselves, and remember how Christ called us in his word, and how long it was ere we listened to it; how he made some impressions on our hearts, and the next temptation blotted them out; he offered his blood, and we would have our sins; he promised heaven, if we would believe, and we would have a hell; with what earnestness did he call, and with what earnestness did we refuse; how gracious was he in his invitations, and how perverse were we in our slightings! A great Redeemer soliciting, and a vile wretch would not be entreated! How often have we misunderstood his word, opposed his will, loathed his ways, nor would admit of the levelling a mole-hill lust, much less a mountain! Were we not like most in the eastern parts, that upon the appearance of the star at the birth of Christ, did not stir to present him with their services! Many might see the star, but only three wise men followed the motions of it. How often hath a star risen upon us to conduct us to Christ, darting out its motions to invite us to seek our Saviour, and we have lain in our old country, our old sins, and would neither bring ourselves, nor send our presents, to Christ! And have we been loyal to Christ since he freed us from the chains of the devil, and snatched us from the lion's paw; have we exercised that faith he desired, and paid him that affection he deserved? Shall not this be matter of shame to us? How little faith is there in the world, and how much unbelief; how little faith is there in the hearts of believers themselves, and how much unbelief! What complaints of this sin have we often heard of in holy men, and that even the nearer they came to God!

(3.) Watch against the stirrings and appearances of it. All God's works, from the beginning of the world, have been to draw out our hope and trust in him. He created man a noble creature, and made the world for his service, that he might depend upon the goodness, wisdom, and power of his Creator; he suffered man to fall into misery, that he might give in redemption a stronger ground of confidence in him, and encouragements of recourse to him; he chased man out of paradise after his sin, that by experimenting the miseries of the world, he might pitch his faith more upon the promised seed; he delivered Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand, an essay and type of what he would do in the deliverance of their souls from a spiritual tyranny. At last, he sends his Son to die upon the cross to satisfy for our sins, that no occasion might remain to doubt of his goodness. It is a sin natural to us, therefore should be watched against. The only people in the world acquainted with the promises of God, and receiving the most eminent deliverances from God, yet how did this sin creep in upon them against all arguments to the contrary, and possess their souls! When they heard of the strength of the Anakims, they consult about returning to Egypt, and would rather submit to the mercy of a provoked enemy, than depend upon the promise of a tender and faithful God. They lose the benefit of the former experience of God's kindness. They had seen the Egyptians sinking to death in the waters, and they think the same power cannot match the Anakims upon land; he had spread a table for them in the wilderness, and they think he cannot as well whet a sword to defend them against their enemies, as though his power were spent upon the Egyptian carcasses. How soon doth a sottish fear starve their faith? The promise of their deliverance from Egypt well performed, did not make them expect the donative of the land of Canaan promised to them by the same word of truth from God, who had as much power to perform the latter, as to accomplish the former. Watch against this sin therefore: a sin, as well as an enemy that is slighted, is most dangerous, and often victorious. Grow in the knowledge of God and Christ; the more we know him, the more we shall trust him. Our confidence in a man increaseth, as our acquaintance with his honesty and ability advanceth. The grounds of

faith are the perfections of God, and the actions and sufferings of Christ; the more ignorant we are of them, the less we shall confide in him. Check unbelieving suggestions at the first appearance; such weeds if suffered to be set will quickly grow. Oppose the truth of God to the suggestions of Satan; Satan is a false spirit, but he is not more false than God is faithful. Take heed of predominant suspicions of God's fidelity, and Christ's sufficiency. Consider which is most worthy of credit, the true God or a false heart; a God we never found false, or a heart we scarce ever found faithful. His charter of mercy is of the same force as ever; he hath not cancelled a bond he stands engaged in. The gospel shall not be drained of its milk till God be emptied of his fidelity; nor the promises cease to be yea and amen, till the seal of the blood of Christ wants an efficacy to confirm them. When you are assaulted by unbelief, you know what power to address. That omnipotent arm that first planted faith, can only protect it against the powers of hell, that would pull it up by the roots. 'Lord, increase our faith' should be as much in our mouths, as 'Lord, pardon our sins.' Let us grieve for it. Our Saviour grieved for the incredulity he perceived in the hearts of the Jews, let us grieve for that we find in ourselves. The mourning under what we feel is a good preservative against any further encroachments. Let us never lay down our arms against it; as God will not cease till he hath put all the enemies of Christ under his feet, so let us not cease till we have put our unbelief, his greatest enemy, under his and our own.

4. Let those that have faith, strengthen their faith the more, by how much the less there is in the world. Let us more straitly embrace the Redeemer,* renounce all other hopes either in heaven or earth, expect happiness and comfort from nothing but the sufferings of the cross, advance continually in that faith whereby we are united to the Saviour of the world, and let temptation be so far from snatching it from us, that they may be occasions of strengthening it in us, as the blustering of the wind makes men wrap their garments closer about them. The more Christ is slighted by others, the more let him be prized by us, that we may, by adhering to him, endeavour as much as in us lies, to repair the glory he loses by others rejecting him. Let that

blood be the more cherished in our hearts, when we see others more desperately treading it under their feet. While we believe he pleads for us in heaven, let us not suffer anything to plead against him in our own bosoms. Joseph of Arimathea owned Christ boldly, when he was crucified, who never did, that we read of, own him before, or ever spake with him, though he was a disciple in secret, Mark 15:43. This use the disciples that remained with Christ made of the apostasy of those in the text: those that were here offended at his word, did, ver. 66, 'turn their backs upon his person.' did the other disciples stagger by the fall of their neighbours? No, they are knit the faster to him: 'Whither shall we go? thou only hast the words of eternal life;' and their revolt drew out that glorious confession from Peter, in the name of the rest, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God,' John 6:68, 69. Strengthen it the more by how much unbelief grows in the world, since we are told by our Saviour, that just before his appearance, for the recovery of the church from the hands of men and devils, and bestowing that glory upon it which he hath promised, there shall scarcely be 'found faith upon the earth,' Luke 18:8; as at the time of Christ's resurrection, which was a token of the resurrection of the church, the disciples did not believe they should ever see his face again. Since therefore Christ hath told us how predominant unbelief should be, let us the more strengthen our faith. And why should we not do it, as well as the disciples did upon this occasion in the text? Is it not the same gospel upon which our faith is founded, on which theirs was; doth not the cross and resurrection of Christ furnish us with greater encouragements than they had at the time of this profession; have we not the same Jesus to look to, who is the author and finisher of our faith as well as of theirs? Why should any of us suffer ourselves to go along with the corruption of the age, instead of resisting it; why should we be borne down by the temptations of the world, instead of combating with them? Let us be fuller of thoughts of the cross of the Redeemer than of the delights of the world; and the stronger our faith, the sweeter will be our comfort in the worst of times.

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