



science in meer Heathen, upon the commission of some unnatural sins. The same light also makes men, when they meet with some notable Afflictions in Providence, to have fearful resentments of sin, as the moral procuring cause of it. Hence the Widow of *Sarepta*, upon the sudden Death of her Son, could to expostulate with the Prophet, 1 Kin. 17. 18. *And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son.*

(3.) THE Word of God hath fully declared the misery of man by sin, and the natural man is capable of being convinced by it. There is a full account given of this misery. There we are acquainted with the holiness of God, which is peculiarly displayed in the displeasure which he conceives against sin. Hab 1. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.* There we are told of the Law or Covenant of God, in which he not only forbade man to sin, but also threatened him with Death in case he should so do, Ezek. 18. 4. *The soul that sinneth it shall die.* There we are assured of the Justice of God, by which he hath engaged himself to punish sin according to the tenor of the Law which he put man under, Psal. 7. 11, 12. *God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.* There we have an account of all the Plagues and Miseries that are contained in that curse of death which is fallen upon man for sin, which are to be gathered out of all the several threatenings recorded in the book of God. There we have the reason rendered of all the fearful Judgments of God that have come upon the World ever since man's fall, which are reduced to Sin as the procuring cause of them. Now all these discoveries are adapted to humane reason. So that a natural Conscience is capable of receiving the impression of a Conviction of them; and made, both to acknowledge their sin, in the miseries they meet with, as did *Pharaoh*, Exod. 9. 27. And to be put into fearful expectation of the miseries which they read in the threatening, though for the present the execution of them is deferred. As they, Isai. 33. 14. *The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings? The Spirit therefore sets home these things on the Conscience, and powerfully produceth these Convictions in it. Of which we may take a brief account; still reserving a respect to the cautions that have been formerly entred.*

[1.] HE convinceth the Sinner of the state of Condemnation that he is in, by the sentence of the Law which he is under. The state of Condemnation into which apostate man is fallen, properly consists in that guilt which he is under, by vertue whereof he is sentenced

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2. HE convinceth them of Misery. This Conviction is subordinated to, and promoted by the former, and hence the Conviction of it is rationally applied to the natural man. For,

(1.) THE misery of the reasonable Creature, is properly the fruit or punishment of sin. How far God may in Sovereignty afflict one that is innocent, meerly to assert his Supremacy, I shall not dispute; but it is certain, that the misery of man is, as inflicted on him by God, an execution of Justice, and so it must refer to some law or rule of righteousness. Now, Death, which comprehends all miseries under it, is said to be the wages of Sin, Rom. 6. 23. And to be brought into the world by it, Chap. 5. 12. Man by making himself sinful, procured to be made miserable. All misery being nothing else, but the execution of the threatening that was denounced against sin, Gen. 2. 17. And if man had not sinned, man had been a perpetual stranger to all misery, any further than as it stood in the threatening to be his faithful Monitor.

(2.) THE light of Nature points man to read his misery in his sin, and his sin in his misery. The natural man is said to be a law to himself, Rom. 2. 14. And it must be so: for the same light which discovers to man that there is a God, who is Governour of the World, and to whom all Creatures owe their service, doth also witness in him right & wrong, that such things he ought to do, and such things to avoid; and not only so, but that there is a Justice of God, which will punish men for their transgressions. This the Apostle plainly insinuates, Rom 1. ult. *Who knowing the judgment of God (that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.* And hence have risen those terrors of Con-

to undergo all the direful effects of the wrath of God which are included in the threatening of the Law. For *Guilt is nothing else but the binding a person over to suffer Punishment, according to the Law under which he stands.* Now there are two ways, by which the word of God discovers this state, both of which the Spirit of God sets home on the Conscience. One is by the Imputation of the first and great transgression; whereby the guilt of it derives to every one of *Adam's* progeny, God treating with him in the first Covenant as the head of Mankind; whereupon all are said to die in him, 1 Cor. 15. 22. And sin and death, not only to be introduced by him, but to pass from him upon all, Rom. 5. 12. *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* The other is by actual sin, the wages whereof is declared to be death, Rom. 6. 23. And the threatening against which is positive, *Ezek. 18. 4.* Now the Spirit of God makes this Conviction, by setting in with these truths, and making the man to acknowledge them, by yielding himself to be under the condemnation of the great Transgression, according to the plain testimony of the Word of God; and shewing them the law against which they have actually transgressed, and the sentence therein denounced for their sins so committed; whereby they stand guilty and condemned in their own Consciences. Thus he makes them to conclude themselves to be *men of death* by the law of God.

[2.] *He shows him how fearfully miserable he is, by reading all the Curses to him, and charging them upon him.* The Death which by the sentence of condemnation, the sinner is doomed to suffer, is a voluminous Word; it is not a single, but a complex misery; and there are very large Commentaries made upon it in the book of G. d. There are innumerable evils comprehended in the curse; for we are told what a fearful thing it is, *Zech. 5. 2, 3.* *And he said unto me, What seest thou? and I answered, I see a flying roll, the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth.* And all these belong to the misery that sin hath brought upon man. The Spirit of God sets this Roll before the man, and makes him to read it; it sets his Conscience on work, and causeth him to meditate terrors. He expounds that Text to him, *Gen. 2. 17.* *But 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 tells him that he is exposed by it, to a bodily Death, and therein to suffer all those sicknesses, pains, losses, disgraces, vexations, which ever were felt or heard of in the World, and at length to undergo a separation of Soul and Body, and be made worms meat in a rotting Grave: That he is an open prey to all spiritual Plagues; to be a vessel of Hell,

led about captive by *Satan* at his will, to be tormented with the stings and lashes of a terrified Conscience, eating out all his comfort, and beginning an Hell in him upon Earth; making him a *Magor Missabib*, an intolerable burden to himself, and an horror to all that see him: That he doth but live to fill up his measure, and heap up the more astonishing treasures of Wrath to himself, and to live in a continual expectation of divine vengeance to cut him off and destroy him. That he is a subject of eternal Death, and is only reprieved for a while during pleasure, meanwhile potting apace to the lake of brimstone, where he is to undergo an eternal separation from the presence of God's favour, and suffer the fury of God in that place where the *Worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched*; but he must spend a wretched Eternity among the *Devils* and the *Damned*, in torments intolerable, and without the least hope of deliverance, through an endless Eternity. Thus he makes him to read, and see this to be his portion laid out in the Curse; and though fain he would, yet he cannot divert his thoughts from it, nor stop his Conscience from passing this doom upon him.

[3.] *He makes him to find and feel the beginnings of those miseries to be already upon him; and that, both those that are temporal, and those that are spiritual.* There is a sensible Conviction which he affords to men, or at least a leading of them by that which is sensible, to an apprehension of their sad state. That there is a begun operation of the Curse upon sinners in this life, is certain, and the Spirit of God makes use of it to bring men to a deeper sight of the misery that is on them. All men readily confess that the condition of mankind is troublesome and sorrowful; but men generally see not the true reason of it, but are ready to say, with the *Philistines*, it is a *Chance*. But God many times, brings some sore trouble upon men, and with it shews them the threatening of his Word, and makes them compare themselves with it, and thereupon to conclude it to be a fruit and effect of it. Thus it was with *Joseph's* Brethren in that distress of theirs, *Gen. 42. 21.* *And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not bear: therefore is this distress come upon us.* Thus men sorrow by the Word and Conscience, are made to shew them the wrath of God, and their misery by it. And thus also spiritual miseries are sensibly begun in them, whiles he sets in with them, and makes them to read on, and see themselves equally exposed to all the rest, and puts them into a fearful expectation of them. And they are convinced that God hath begun with, and let loose his hand upon them, and they are terribly afraid that he will proceed to the uttermost. And hereby he causeth them to see that sin hath made them miserable. Thus God speaks to them, *Jer. 2. 17, 18, 19.*

Hast thou not procured this unto thy self, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? And now what hast thou to do in the way to Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. And this indeed is one great end of the Judgments of God which he brings on men, whether publick or personal, that now he may bring them to consideration, and by the miserable effects of it to give them a more clear sight of the mischief which sin hath exposed them unto.

[4.] *HE convinceth him of the powerful Obligation he is under to suffer all the rest of the miseries contained in the threatening.* And he many times makes use of the former in order to the production of this. Though the curse be out against every sinner, and all the plagues in it are the portion that he is doomed to receive from the hand of God; yet it is here a day of patience and forbearance, in which the hand of mercy holds back the full execution of that sentence. And such is the vanity and folly of Sinners, that they grow secure thereupon, yea are ready to think themselves happy, and put away all fears of after-misery. But when the Spirit pleaseth, he makes the Sinner to see his danger, and puts him from his security, and that by leading of him into a Contemplation of the strength of the Curse that is upon him: He shews him the indispensable necessity of undergoing the utmost extremity of it, if there be no Redemption provided for, and applied to him. He causeth him to understand that the sentence of the Law is positive, that there are those glorious Attributes of God engaged for the accomplishment of it, which would lose of their glory, if he should not pursue it. His *Holiness*, which is set against, and cannot endure Sinners: His *Truth*, which bound itself to the fulfilling the threatening as well as the promise of the Covenant: His *Justice*, for the illustration of the glory whereof, the Law or Covenant of Works are established to be a rule of God's procedure with man. In these the Sinner is made to read how certain he is to undergo all the rest, as well as what he hath felt; that delays are no discharges; that God is not slack, but will in due time, fulfill all that he hath said.

[5.] *HE convinceth him, that it is utterly beyond his power to deliver himself from this misery, yea, beyond the power of the whole Creation.* That his help is not in his own hand, nor any person or thing in Heaven or Earth, that can relieve him, if God do not, *Psal. 73. 25.* And this Conviction may be also wrought upon the natural Conscience. For, tho' there must be a principle of Grace in us, to apprehend the spiritual misery flowing from the

nature of sin, yet the man is convincible of his legal misery by virtue of his relation to the Covenant of Works, by the light of common reason, when applied powerfully by the Spirit; and from that of his helpless state in regard either of himself or the creature. For, when he reads his misery grounded in the sentence of the Law condemning him, and the Truth, Justice, and Power of God engaged in it, to bring all this misery upon him, he must conclude that there is but one of these two ways for his escape; either by fortifying against, and so securing himself from the wrath of God; or by composition, buying himself out of the hands of the Law either by force, or by price: but he is convinced that neither of these courses will avail him. Not the former, because he hath to do with the great God, who is a great King, against whom there is no rising up; whom none ever resisted and prospered; before whom the mountains quake, and the hills tremble. There is no hiding from him, who is Omniscient, and Omnipotent, *Jer. 23. 24. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him saith the Lord? do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.* There is no entering the lists against him. Hence that, *1 Cor. 10. 22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?* No Garrison in the World strong enough to keep out his fury from overflowing, *Isai. 24. 17. Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.* Not the latter, for that must be by a valuable Redemption-price paid, and a sufficient Righteousness offered; but he can do neither: all the World will not make up such a sum, *Psal. 49. 7, 8. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.)* God therefore blows on such an offer, *Mich. 6. 6, 7. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oyl? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* And as for a Righteousness of his own, it cannot avail, because nothing but Death will answer the sentence of the Law.

[6.] *HE convinceth him that all this is righteously befallen him.* It is true, the corrupt reasonings of carnal men do here rise up, and are ready to find fault with the rigour of the sentence of the Law, and charge God for being an hard Master: But yet the Sinners mouth is here also stopt. Hence that, *Rom. 3. 19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* And our Saviour Christ tells us that the Spirit shall convince the world of Righteousness, *Joh. 16. 8.* And to this belongs the Conviction of the Righteousness of the Law; from which

flows a rational Conviction of the justice of the sentence of it, & that not merely because it is God's Law. And the same reason that tells us there is a God, saith that he cannot be unrighteous. Hence that, Rom. 3. 5, 6. *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for how then shall God judge the world.* But there is also a resentment on the Consciences of men, of the demerit of some sins, Rom. 1. ult. *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.* So that a Pharaoh's Conscience will declare for God, and pronounce him righteous, Exod. 9. 27. And by all these Convictions the sinner is made to find & feel himself to be extremely miserable. And this may suffice for the Convictions themselves.

2. *WE proceed to consider the Effects which the Spirit works by them on the Consciences of Sinners.* Which are especially,

1. *THIS Conviction puts them into horrible Fear.* Fear is properly a reluctancy on the heart, on the apprehension of the danger of some approaching mischief; and ariseth from the hatred in us against it, and an earnest desire to escape it. Thus Sinners &c. *Isai. 33.*

14. *The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites.* This affection was put into man at first, to make him cautious to himself, to keep out of harms way, and not to adventure upon any sin. But since man's fall, and the misery befallen him by it, there is a double improvement made of it by God in his Providence. Partly, *as a Punishment of Sin, and the beginning of hell on Sinners in this Life:* and this is, by making such impressions by the forecited Convictions on the Consciences of sinners, as, together with their fearful expectation of fiery indignation, they put away all hope from them, & abandon themselves to desperation; as did Cain and Judas. Partly, *as a Preparatory for the gracious discovery of the Redemption of Christ to the Souls of men, in order to their making it welcome when it comes.* For, fear, of its own nature, puts men upon flight, makes men to seek an escape, if possible, from the thing they are afraid of, as long as there are any glimmering hopes of a possibility for their escaping, as these are discovered to sinners by the Gospel. We shall therefore find such an expression as that, *Psal. 83. 15, 16. So persecute them with thy tempest; and make them afraid with thy storm: Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.* And we find that Paul makes use of *the terrors of the Lord to persuade men withal, 2 Cor. 5. 11.* And if such a Conviction as this be really wrought in the Conscience, it cannot but leave the impression of this fear upon him.

2. *IT eats out all his Comfort in any Creature Enjoyment.* Sinners, in this life, do enjoy a great many outward favours of God: And while Conscience is asleep, and the terrors

of the Lord do not amaze it, they please themselves in the fruition of them, & reckon themselves happy therein. We have an account of their jollity in their prosperity, *Job 21. 12, 13.* But when Conscience is once awakened with the Thunder, and wounded with the Lightning of these Convictions, their whole mirth is marred, and their jollity confounded. Either it is to them as the story of *Abigail* was to *Nabal, 1 Sam. 25. 37.* or as the news of *Jonathas* to *Adonijah*, and his guests, *1 King. 1. 49, 50.* or as the handwriting on the wall was to *Belshazzar* in the midst of his carousing, *Dan. 5. 6.* All tends rather to aggravate than moderate the fear and trouble upon them. They can taste no more relish in any thing here, than in the *white of an egg.* These thoughts are like the *coloquintida* of the Prophets, making them to cry out, *There is death in the Pot.* They see the curse of God upon all, which imbitters every Relation, and every Enjoyment to them.

3. *IT strips him of his carnal Hopes & Confidences.* There is a vain hope, which secure sinners bolster themselves up withal, and on which they build a presumptuous confidence that all is and shall be well with them, and by which they put away from them all fears of the evil day. But when this Conviction comes home upon them, it shrinks up all these hopes to nothing; and their confidences fly away from them. So we have the Hypocrite set forth, *Job 8. 13, 14, 15.* For now he is made to find the vanity, emptiness, and deceitfulness of all the props on which he supported himself, that they are but the staff of a broken reed; that they can neither save him from, nor relieve him under the misery that is upon him, and that is halting to devour him. And he is made, though unwillingly, to throw them all away. As, *Isai. 2. 20, 21. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats: To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.* He is made to see and acknowledge, that if he have no other Object of trust, he is lost beyond hope for ever.

4. *IT makes him very inquisitive, whether there be no possibility of his escape.* Tho' the corrupt heart in man hath a natural liking to sin, whereby his lusts are gratified, yet nature itself relucts at misery. And hence the fear of it puts him upon making that his first inquiry, after his danger is realized to him, *But is there no way to be delivered from it? Must I needs dye? Is there no hope but I must dwell with Everlasting Burnings? Is there nothing to be done that I may be saved from the Wrath to come?* Thus did they, when they were pricked at their hearts, *Act. 2. 37.* Thus did the rough Jaylor, when terrified, *Act. 16. 29, 30.* He that before, despised all counsels, and

and made light of Gospel Invitations, now begins to ask serious Questions.

5. *IT sets him upon legal Repentance and Reformation.* This indeed is the farthest that Convictions leads the most unto; and it is usually the first thing that any set themselves about. And the ground or reason of it lies here: This Conviction of sin & misery go together; the Spirit not only convinceth men that they are miserable, but whence their misery proceeds, viz. from their sin; that that is it which hath involved them in all these sorrows. And tho' they have not a genuine hatred of sin, for that is a *saving Grace*, and flows from the Grace of Regeneration; yet they find it too hot for them. They see, that if they go on in their ways of sin, they run upon the point of the Quire, and go certainly to destruction; this makes them to abstain, and take up a course of Duties instead thereof. Thus did *Israel* once and again, when God's Judgments on them, wrought Convictions, and Terrors in their Consciences.

6. *IT puts him upon a more diligent and serious Attendance on the Reports of the Gospel.* Before, he little regarded the Ordinances, but either neglected coming at them, or took no heed to the Truths delivered in them, or entertained them with Prejudice and Contempt. But now, the very hearing that the Gospel is a discovery made of a way in which miserable Sinners may be delivered, and obtain Salvation, makes him to entertain a civil respect to and liking of it; and thereupon he hears these glad tidings with no little rational content: so did *the stony ground hearers*, Mat. 13. 20. Such effects as these are, the Spirit works, as he sees meet, by these Convictions.

U S E. I. *HENCE Learn, what to think of those that are strangers to these Convictions.* We have already observed, that the Spirit works them diversly, both as to the manner and degree. But that man that pretends to believe in Christ for Salvation, that hath not been convinced of his sin, and misery by it, cannot give a good reason of his hope, or satisfy his own Conscience what he trusts in Christ for.

U S E. II. *LEARN hence, that these Convictions alone, are not a sufficient evidence of a man's good and safe state.* They are of the way in which God usually, under the means brings Sinners home to himself; but they may be wrought upon the natural principles that are in fallen man, without any saving change in the heart; and therefore cannot give a distinguishing character of a Child of God. It is therefore presumption for any to build their confidence upon them. These Convictions may dye away, or they may take up at a legal Repentance, short of saving Grace.

U S E. III. *HENCE it is our duty to endeavour with men, to bring them to, and nourish in them, these Convictions.* If we desire, and would be instrumental of the Conversion of our friends, we must begin here. To tell

them of a Christ, before we shew them their need of him, is preposterous: And that is done by laying open before them, their Sin and Misery. And when we see any labouring under the distress of these Convictions, let us not be sorry for, but glad of it: and take heed how we seek to stop them. If they tend to despair, it is good to offer encouragement, but not to hinder but help the kindly operation of them, as to encourage our praying for them, and to foment the operation of them, unto a godly sorrow under them; and thereby, doing what in us lies to help on the Repentance that is not to be repented of, and put them upon seeking of Christ resolutely till they have found him.

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