We have here, in a few deep and wonderful  
words, *the work of the Spirit on the world*  
set forth. This work He shall begin **when  
He is come**,—come, that is, **to you**: not,  
however, merely ‘*by your means*,’ but

personally: so that it is *not the work and  
witness of the Apostles* which is spoken of,  
except in so far as they are servants of the  
Holy Spirit, but *His own immediate*

personal working.

**8. will convict**] It is  
difficult to give in one word the deep  
meaning of the original term: *‘convince*’  
approaches perhaps near to it, but does not  
express the double sense, which is

manifestly here intended—of a *convincing* unto  
salvation, and a *convicting* unto

condemnation :—‘*reprove’* is far too weak,

conveying merely the idea of an outward rebuke,  
whereas this reaches into the heart, and  
works inwardly in both the above-mentioned

ways. See the whole question  
amply discussed in Archdeacon Hare’s  
“Mission of the Comforter,” vol. ii. note  
K.

Lücke’s comment is valuable:  
‘The testimony of the Holy Ghost in  
behalf of Christ as opposed to the

unbelieving world (ch. xv. 26) is essentially a  
*refutation*, a demonstration of its wrong  
and error. All the apostolic preaching, as  
addressed to the world, takes necessarily  
this polemical form (1 Tim. v. 20; 2 Tim.  
iv. 2; iii. 16; Titus i. 9,13; ii. 15). And  
the more difficult was the disciples’ conflict,  
against the power of this world with only  
the Word for their weapon, the more

comfort was it for them, that the power of  
God the Spirit working by this *refutation*  
was their help. In Matt. x. 19, 20; Luke  
xii. 11, 12, the apologetic side of their  
conflict, which was in close connexion with  
the polemical, is brought into view. In  
the word here used is always implied the  
refutation, the overcoming of an error, a  
wrong, —by the truth and the right.  
And when, by means of the “*refutation*”  
the truth detects the error, and the right  
the wrong, so that a man becomes conscious  
of them,—then arises the feeling of *guilt*,  
which is ever painful. Thus every such  
“*refutation*” is a chastening, a

punishment. And hence this office has been  
called the *punitive* office of the Spirit.  
The *effect* of the “*refutation*” carried on  
by the divine Spirit in the world may be  
*to harden*: but its *aim* is the *deliverance*  
of the world. This term **the world**, in  
John, includes those who are not yet  
delivered (from the power of Satan to God)  
who *may be yet delivered*,—not the

condemned. If the “*refutation*” of the world  
is a moral process, its result may just as  
well be conversion, as non-conversion. *Only  
thus* did the refutation carried on by the  
Spirit answer the end of Christ’s coming ;—  
only thus could it be a cheering support  
to the Apostles. Certainly, the **judgment**  
with which it closes is *condemnation*, not  
however of the *world*, but of the *Prince of  
the world*.’

De Wette denies the  
*salutary* side of this convicting process—  
but he is certainly wrong: see below.  
These three words, **sin, righteousness,  
judgment**, comprehend the three great  
steps of advance in spiritual truth among  
men. Of itself the world does not know  
what *Sin* is, what *Righteousness* is, what  
*Judgment* is. Nor can either of these be  
revealed to any man, except by the Spirit  
of God working within him. Each man’s  
conscience has some glimmering of light  
on each of these; *some* consciousness of  
guilt, *some* sense of right, *some* power of  
judgment of what is transitory and

worthless: but all these are unreal and

unpractical, till the convicting work of the  
Spirit has wrought in him.

**9.**] And  
the great opening of *Sin* to the world is  
to shew them that its root and essence  
is, *unbelief in Christ as the Son of God*.  
UNBELIEF:—for, mankind being alien  
from God by nature, the first step towards  
their recovery must be to lay hold on that  
only safety which He has provided for  
them; and that laying hold is *faith*, and  
the not doing it, when revealed and placed  
before them, is *sin*. Beforetime, it was  
also *unbelief* ;—’The fool hath said in his  
heart, there is *no God* :’—but now,—for  
we can only believe as God has revealed  
Himself,—it is unbelief in *Christ the Son  
of God*,—the *having no desire to come to  
Him*: see this pointedly asserted 1 John  
v. 10–12. Remember, this unbelief is not  
a mere want of historical faith,—but

unbelief *in its very root*,—the want of a  
personal and living recognition of Jesus  
as the Lord (1 Cor. xii. 3), which, wherever  
the Spirit has ‘opened His commission’   
by the planting of the visible Church, is  
*the condemning sin* of the world. Of this  
He shall *convince* those who are brought  
out of the world, and ultimately *convict*  
those who remain in it and die in their  
sins (see Hare, “ Mission of the Comforter,”