

while the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, yet we did not know, we did not consider. We became regardless of a father's hand, and of a father's mercies. We provoked him by our backslidings, and wandered after the sight of our own eyes and the imaginations of our own hearts. We left our father's house, spurned a father's restraints and a father's counsels, and sought our own pleasure and did our own works. And though he wooed us with his love, and entreated us by his mercies, though he warned and admonished us, though he often corrected us; so that, if possible, he might allure us, or bring us again to himself, yet we continued obstinate and perverse. We would none of his counsel, and despised all his reproof, neither counted the long suffering of the Lord toward us to be salvation.

Or, regarding him in the relation of a king—a relation which he does sustain to us—we had rebelled against him, had thrown off our allegiance, and trampled upon his laws. We had asked, "who is Lord over us?"—"what is the Almighty that we should serve him, or what profit should we have if we should pray unto him?" We had dared to rise in rebellion against the "King of kings," had perpetrated treason against "the High supremacy of Heaven," and so exposed ourselves to the execution of sovereign vengeance.

Enjoying the divine friendship, we became the enemies of God; and may be described in these awful words of scripture, "haters of God".

Reason and experience confirm this view. They tell us that we do not like to retain God in our thoughts, that we desire not the knowledge of his ways, that it is the language of our hearts by nature, and as long as we continue in our natural state: "depart from us, depart from us". Does not the wickedness of the life proclaim the enmity of the heart? If we loved God, we would keep his commandments. The love of God would naturally prompt to a cheerful acquiescence in his will, and an active obedience to his commands. But how much is the reverse of all this the fact! How rebellious, how ungrateful, how disobedient, is our uniform conduct! And even where there may not be open, there may be cherished and inward hostility. The enmity of the carnal mind is as much seen in the desire to forget God, to exclude him from our thoughts, and

from any connexion with our lives, as in the most palpable acts of wickedness—Enmity consists in *aversion* as well as *opposition*: it may exist and reign most fearfully in the disposition even although it should never express itself in the act.

Now, it was while man was contemplated in this state—the enemy of God—alienated from him in his mind and by wicked works—that God still loved him, and purposed to reconcile him to himself, not only save him from merited punishment, which is also accomplished in the plan which was adopted, but subdue his enmity, and win his love. And the way by which this is accomplished is by the effect of God's love upon our hearts, expressed when we were enemies. It is the power of love to produce love where there was before hostility: "We love Him because he first loved us." But this love must first be exhibited before it could produce this effect; and how was it to be exhibited? Was it to pardon sin without an atonement? Was it to set no expression of displeasure upon transgression? Was it not to mark God's sense of our wickedness, our rebellion, our hostility? This could not be. It was a great boon to pardon sin, to remit transgression, to pass by the offence of our wickedness; but this could not be done of itself, or irrespective of other considerations. God could not contradict or tarnish any of his attributes. He could not exhibit his love but in harmony with his other perfections. These must be maintained; and purposing to exhibit his love, so as to win our love in return, he accordingly found a way of doing so in perfect consistency with his other perfections, at the same time that it presented his love in a more striking light, and was the better calculated, therefore, to affect our hearts, and accomplish the ultimate end in view. "God so loved the world," it is said, "that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life." This was the exhibition of his love, by which, while the plan secured the atonement for sin, God would subdue our hearts, and win their regard. The plan is recognised also in these words, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love to