

SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,
BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS
SAMUEL DAVIES, A.M.,
Sometime President of the College in New-Jersey.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

TO WHICH ARE NOW ADDED,
THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,
NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORMER EDITIONS;
MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR;
AND
TWO SERMONS ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

By the Rev. Drs. Gibbons and Finley.

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SERMON III.

Sinners entreated to be reconciled to God.

2 COR. V. 20.—*We then are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

To preside in the solemnities of public worship, to direct your thoughts, and choose for you the subjects of your meditation on those sacred hours which you spend in the house of God, and upon the right improvement of which your everlasting happiness so much depends, this is a province of the most tremendous importance that can be devolved upon a mortal; and every man of the sacred character, who knows what he is about, must tremble at the thought, and be often anxiously perplexed what subject he shall choose, what he shall say upon it, and in what manner he shall deliver his message. His success in a great measure depends upon his choice, for though the blessed Spirit is the proper agent, and though the best means, without his efficacious concurrence, are altogether fruitless, yet he is wont to bless those means that are best adapted to do good; and after a long course of languid and fruitless efforts, which seem to have been unusually disowned by my divine Master, what text shall I choose out of the inexhaustible treasure of God's word? In what new method shall I speak upon it? What new untried experiments shall I make? Blessed Jesus? my heavenly Master? direct thy poor perplexed servant who is at a loss, and knows not what to do; direct him that has tried, and tried again, all the expedients he could think of, but almost in vain, and now scarcely knows what it is to hope for success? Divine direction, my brethren, has been sought; and may I hope it is that which has turned my mind to address you this day on the important subject of your reconciliation to God, and to become an humble imitator of the great St. Paul, whose affecting words I have read to you. *We then are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

The introduction to this passage you find in the foregoing verses, *God hath given to us* (the apostles) *the ministry of reconciliation*; the sum and substance of which is, namely, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." As if he had said, "The great Sovereign of the universe, though highly provoked, and justly displeased with our rebellious world, has been so gracious as to contrive a plan of reconciliation whereby they may not only escape the punishment they

deserve, but also be restored to the favour of God, and all the privileges of his favourite subjects. This plan was laid in Christ; that is, it was he who was appointed, and undertook to remove all obstacles out of the way of their reconciliation, so that it might be consistent with the honour and dignity of God and his Government. This he performed by a life of perfect obedience, and an atoning death, instead of rebellious man. Though “he knew no sin” of his own: yet “he was made sin,” that is, a sin-offering, or a sinner by imputation “for us,” that we might “be made the righteousness of God in him.” Thus all hindrances are removed on God’s part. The plan of a treaty of reconciliation is formed, approved, and ratified in the court of heaven; but then it must be published, all the terms made known, and the consent of the rebels solicited and gained. It is not enough that all impediments to peace are removed on God’s part; they must also be removed on the part of man; the reconciliation must be mutual; both the parties must agree. Hence arises the necessity of the ministry of reconciliation which was committed to the apostles, those prime ministers of the kingdom of Christ, and in a lower sphere to the ordinary ministers of the gospel in every age. The great business of their office is to publish the treaty of peace; that is, the articles of reconciliation, and to use every motive to gain the consent of mankind to these articles. It is this office St. Paul is discharging, when he says, *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

We are ambassadors for Christ. The proper notion of an ambassador, is that of a person sent by a king to transact affairs in his name, and according to his instructions, with foreign states, or part of his subjects, to whom he does not think proper to go himself and treat with them in his own person. Thus a peace is generally concluded between contending nations, not by their kings in person, but by their plenipotentiaries, acting in their name, and by their authority; and, while they keep to their instructions, their negotiations and agreements are as valid and authentic as if they were carried on and concluded by their masters in person. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is not personally present in our world to manage the treaty of peace himself, but he has appointed first his apostles, and then the ministers of the gospel through every age, to carry it on in his name. This is their proper character; they are ambassadors for Christ, his plenipotentiaries, furnished with a commission and instructions to make overtures of reconciliation to a rebel world, and treat with them to gain their consent.

Indeed, aspiring ecclesiastics have assumed high sounding titles merely to produce extravagant honours to themselves. They have called themselves the ambassadors of Christ, messengers from God, the plenipotentiaries and vice-roys of heaven, and I know not what, not with a design to do honour to their

Master, but to keep the world in a superstitious awe of themselves. This priestly pride and insolence I utterly abhor; and yet I humbly adventure to assume the title of an ambassador of the great King of heaven, and require you to regard me in this high character: but then you must know, that while I am making this claim, I own myself obliged inviolably to adhere to the instructions of my divine Master contained in the Bible. I have no power over your faith, no power to dictate or prescribe; but my work is only just to publish the articles of peace as my Master has established and revealed them in his word, without the least addition, diminution, or alteration. I pretend to no higher power than this, and this power I must claim, unless I would renounce my office; for who can consistently profess himself a minister of Christ, without asserting his right and power to publish what his Lord has taught, and communicate his royal instructions?

Therefore without usurping an equality with St. Paul, or his fellow apostles, I must tell you in his language, I appear among you this day as the ambassador of the most high God; I am discharging an embassy for Christ and I tell you this with no other design than to procure your most serious regard to what I say. If you consider it only as my declaration, whatever regard you pay to it, the end of my ministry will not be answered upon you. The end of my office is not to make myself the object of your love and veneration, but to reconcile you to God; but you cannot be reconciled to God while you consider the proposal as made to you only by your fellow mortal. You must regard it as made to you by the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Mediator between God and man. I not only allow, but even invite and charge you to inquire and judge whether what I say be agreeable to my divine instructions, which are as open to your inspection as mine, and to regard it no farther than it is so: but if I follow these instructions, and propose the treaty of peace to you just as it is concluded in heaven, then I charge you to regard it as proposed by the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, though through my unworthy lips. Consider yourselves this day as the hearers not of a preacher formed out of the clay like yourselves, but of the Lord Jesus Christ. Suppose him here in person treating with you about your reconciliation to God, and what regard you would pay to a proposal made by him in person, with all his divine royalties about him, that you should now show to the treaty I am to negotiate with you in his name and stead.

The next sentence in my text binds you still more strongly to this; *as though God did beseech you by us*. As if he had said, “God the Father also concurs in this treaty of peace, as well as Christ the great Peace-maker; and as we discharge an embassy for Christ, so we do also for God; and you are to regard our beseeching and exhorting, as though the great God did in person

beseech and exhort you by us.” What astonishing condescension is here intimated? not that the ministers of Christ should beseech you; this would be no mighty condescension: but that the supreme Jehovah should beseech you; that he should not only command you with a stern air of authority as your Sovereign, but as a friend, nay, as a petitioner, should affectionately beseech you, you despicable, guilty worms, obnoxious rebels? How astonishing, how God-like, how unprecedented and inimitable is this condescension? Let heaven and earth admire and adore? It is by us, indeed, by us your poor fellow mortals, that he beseeches: but O? let not this tempt you to disregard him or his entreaty: though he employs such mean ambassadors, yet consider his dignity who sends us, and then you cannot disregard his message even from our mouth.

The apostle, having thus prepared the way, proceeds to the actual exercise of his office as an ambassador for Christ: *We pray you*, says he, *in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*. As if he had said, “If Christ were now present in person among you, this is what he would propose to you, and urge upon you, that you would be reconciled to God: but him the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution of all things; but he has left us his poor servants to officiate in his place as well as we can, and we would prosecute the same design, we would urge upon you what he would urge, were he to speak; therefore we pray you, in his stead, be ye reconciled to God: we earnestly pray you to be reconciled; that is the utmost which such feeble worms as we can do; we can only pray and beg, but your compliance is not within the command of our power; the compliance belongs to you; and remember, if you refuse, you must take it upon yourselves, and answer the consequence.”

Having thus explained the text, I proceed in my poor manner to exemplify it by negotiating the treaty with you for your reconciliation to God; and you see my business lies directly with such of you as are yet enemies to God: you are the only persons that stand in need of reconciliation. As for such of you (and I doubt not but there are such among you) whose innate enmity has been subdued, and who are become the friends and subjects of the King of heaven after your guilty revolt, I must desire you as it were to stand by yourselves for the present hour, and help me by your prayers, while I am speaking to your poor brethren, who still continue in that state of hostility and rebellion against God, in which you once were, and the miseries of which you well know, and still lament and deplore.

But by this proposal I am afraid I have deprived myself of hearers on this subject; for have you not already placed yourselves among the lovers of God, who consequently do not need to be reconciled to him? Is not every one of you ready to say to me, “If your business only lies with the enemies of God, you have no concern with me in this discourse; for, God forbid that I should

be an enemy to him. I have indeed been guilty of a great many sins, but I had no bad design in them, and never had the least enmity against my Maker; so far from it that I shudder at the very thought?" This is the first obstacle that I meet with in discharging my embassy: the embassy itself is looked upon as needless by the persons concerned, like an attempt to reconcile those that are good friends already. This obstacle must be removed before we can proceed any farther.

I am far from charging any of you with so horrid a crime as enmity and rebellion against God, who can produce satisfactory evidences to your own conscience that you are his friends. I only desire that you would not flatter yourselves, nor draw a rash and groundless conclusion in an affair of such infinite moment, but that you would put the matter to a fair trial, according to evidence, and then let your conscience pass an impartial sentence as your judge, under the supreme Judge of the world.

You plead "Not guilty" to the charge, and allege that you have always loved God; but if this be the case, whence is it that you have afforded him so few of your affectionate and warm thoughts? Do not your tenderest thoughts dwell upon the objects of your love? But has not your mind been shy of him who gave you your power of thinking? Have you not lived stupidly thoughtless of him for days and weeks together? Nay, have not serious thoughts of him been unwelcome, and made you uneasy? and have you not turned every way to avoid them? Have you not often prayed to him, and concurred in other acts of religious worship, and yet had but very few or no devout thoughts of him, even at the very time? And is that mind well affected towards him that is so averse to him, and turns every way to shun a glance of him? Alas! is this your friendship for the God that made you, whose you are, and whom you ought to serve?

Would you not have indulged the fool's wish, that there were no God, had not the horror and impossibility of the thing restrained you? But, notwithstanding this restraint, has not this blasphemy shed its malignant poison at times in your hearts? If there was no God, then you would sin without control, and without dread of punishment; and how sweet was this? Then you would have nothing to do with that melancholy thing, religion; and what an agreeable exemption would this be? But is this your love for him, to wish the Parent of all beings out of being? Alas! can the rankest enmity rise higher?

Again, if you are reconciled to God, whence is it that you are secretly, or perhaps openly disaffected to his image, I mean the purity and strictness of his law, and the lineaments of holiness that appear upon the unfashionable religious few? If you loved God, you would of course love everything that bears any resemblance to him. But are you not conscious that it is otherwise with you; that you murmur and cavil at the restraints of God's law, and would

much rather abjure it, be free from it, and live as you list? Are you not conscious that nothing exposes a man more to your secret disgust and contempt, and perhaps to your public mockery and ridicule, than a strict and holy walk, and a conscientious observance of the duties of devotion? And if you catch your neighbour in any of these offences, do not your hearts rise against him? and what is this but the effect of your enmity against God? Do you thus disgust a man for wearing the genuine image and resemblance of your friend? No; the effect of love is quite the reverse.

Again, If you do but reflect upon the daily sensations of your own minds, must you not be conscious that you love other persons and things more than God? that you love pleasure, honour, riches, your relations and friends, more than the glorious and ever blessed God? Look into your own hearts, and you will find it so: you will find that this, and that, and a thousand things in this world, engross more of your thoughts, your cares, desires, joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears, than God, or any of his concerns. Now it is essential to the love of God that it be supreme. You do not love him truly at all, in the least degree, if you do not love him above all; above all persons and things in the whole universe. He is a jealous God, and will not suffer a rival. A lower degree of love for supreme excellence is an affront and indignity. Is it not therefore evident, even to your own conviction, that you do not love God at all? and what is this but to be his enemy? To be indifferent towards him, as though he were an insignificant being, neither good nor evil, a mere cipher; to feel neither love nor hatred towards him, but to neglect him, as if you had no concern with him one way or other; what a horrible disposition is this towards him, who is supremely and infinitely glorious and amiable, your Creator, your Sovereign, and Benefactor; who therefore deserves and demands your highest love; or, in the words of his own law, *that you should love him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength*. Mark xii. 30. From what can such indifference towards him proceed but from disaffection and enmity? It is in this way that the enmity of men towards God most generally discovers itself. They feel, perhaps, no positive workings of hatred towards him, unless when their innate corruption, like an exasperated serpent, is irritated by conviction from his law; but they feel an apathy, a listlessness, an indifference towards him; and because they feel no more, they flatter themselves they are far from hating him; especially as they may have very honourable speculative thoughts of him floating on the surface of their minds. But Alas! this very thing, this indifference, or listless neutrality, is the very core of their enmity; and if they are thus indifferent to him now, while enjoying so many blessings from his hand, and while he delays their punishment, how will their enmity swell and rise to all the rage of a devil against him, when he puts forth his vindictive hand and

touches them, and so gives occasion to it to discover its venom? My soul shudders to think what horrid insurrections and direct rebellion this temper will produce when once irritated, and all restraints are taken off; which will be the doom of sinners in the eternal world; and then they will have no more of the love of God in them than the most malignant devil in hell? If, therefore, you generally feel such an indifference towards God, be assured you are not reconciled to him, but are his enemies in your hearts.

Again, All moral evil, or sin, is contrary to God; it is the only thing upon earth, or in hell, that is most opposite to his holy nature; and the object of his implacable and eternal indignation. He is of purer eyes than to behold it or endure it. It is his hatred to sin that has turned his heart against any of his creatures, and is the cause of all the vengeance that he has inflicted upon the guilty inhabitants of our world, or the spirits of hell. There is no object in the whole compass of the universe so odious to you as every sin is to a pure and all-holy God: now it is impossible you should at once love two things so opposite, so eternally irreconcilable. As much love as you have for any unlawful pleasure, just so much enmity there is in your hearts towards God. Hence, says St. Paul, *you were enemies in your minds, by wicked works*. Col. i. 21. Intimating that the love and practice of our wicked works is a plain evidence of inward enmity of mind towards God. The works of the flesh are sinful: hence, says the same apostle, *the carnal mind, or the minding of the flesh*, Rom. viii. 7, *is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so then they that are in the flesh*, or under the power of a carnal mind, *cannot please God*. Rom. viii. 8. Because, whatever seeming acts of obedience they perform, and whatever appearances of friendship they put on, they are at heart enemies to God, and therefore cannot please him, who searches their heart, and sees the secret principle of their actions. Hence also St. James tells us, *that if any man would be a friend to the world, he is the enemy of God, because the friendship of the world is enmity against God*. James iv. 4. For the world inflames the lusts of men, and occasions much sin; and if we love the tempter, we love the sin to which it would allure us; and if we love the sin, we are the enemies of God; and therefore the friendship of the world is enmity against God. This then is an established maxim, without straining the matter too far, that as far as you love any sin, so far are you enemies to God. The love, as well as the service of such opposite masters, is utterly inconsistent. Now, do not your own consciences witness against you, that you have indulged, and still do habitually indulge the love of some sin or other? Whether it be covetousness or sensual pleasure, or ambition, or some angry passion, or whatever sin it be, as far as you love it, so far you are enemies to God: and if you take a view of your temper and

practice, must you not unavoidably be convicted of this dreadful guilt? Horrible as the crime is, is it not an undeniable matter of fact, that you do really love some sin, and consequently hate the infinitely amiable and ever blessed God? and therefore you are the persons I have to deal with, as needing reconciliation with God.

Farther, take a view of your general manner of serving God in the duties of religion: your manner of praying, meditation, hearing the word of God, and other acts of devotion, and then inquire, Do you perform this service as the willing servants of a master you love? Do you not enter upon such service with reluctance or listlessness, and perform it with languor and indifference as a business to which you have no heart? But is this your manner of performing a labour of love to a friend? Will your own reason suffer you to think you would be so lukewarm and heartless in the worship of God if you sincerely loved him? No: love is an active principle, a vigorous spring of action; and if this were the principle of your religious services, you would infuse more spirit and life into them, you would exert all your powers, and be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. Rom. xii. 11.

But when you have performed offices of devotion with some degree of earnestness, which no doubt you have sometimes done, what was the principle or spring of your exertion? Was it the love of God? or was it purely the low principle of self-love? Why did you pray with such eager importunity, and attend upon the other means of grace with so much seriousness, but because you apprehended your dear selves were in danger, and you were not willing to be miserable for ever? This servile, mercenary kind of religious earnestness will not prove that you love God, but only that you love yourselves; and this you may do, and yet have no more true goodness, or genuine love to God than an infernal spirit; for there is not a spirit in hell but what loves himself. Indeed, self-love is so far from being an evidence of the love of God, that the extravagant excess of it is the source of that wickedness that abounds among men and devils. I do not mean by this utterly to exclude self-love out of genuine religion; it must have its place in the most excellent and best beings, but then it must be kept in a proper subordination, and not advance the creature above the Creator, and dethrone the supreme King of the universe. His love must be uppermost in the heart, and when that has the highest place, the indulgence of self-love in pursuing our own happiness is lawful, and an important duty. Now, do you not find from this view of the case, that you are not reconciled to God, even in your most devout and zealous hours, much less in the languid inactive tenor of your lives? If so, place yourselves among those that I have to do with today; that is, the enemies of God.

So also, when you perform good offices to mankind; when you are harmless, obliging neighbours; when you are charitable to the poor, or strictly just in trade; is the love of God, and a regard to his authority, the reason and principle of your actions? That is, do you do these things because God commands them, and because you delight to do what he commands? or rather, do you not do them merely because it is your nature to perform humane and honourable actions in such instances; or because you may acquire honour, or some selfish advantage by them? Alas! that God should be neglected, forgotten, and left out of the question, as of no importance even in those actions that are materially good? that even what he commands should be done, not because he commands it, but for some other sordid selfish reason? O? if you did really love God, would you thus disregard him, and do nothing for his sake, not only when you are doing what he forbids, but even when you are performing what he has made your duty? Would he be such a cipher, a mere nothing in your practical esteem, if your hearts were reconciled to him as your God? No; such of you must look upon yourselves as the very persons whom I am to pray, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

I might thus, from obvious facts, lay before you many more evidences of your disaffection to the great God; but I must leave some room for the other part of my address to you, in which I am to persuade you to accept of the proposal of reconciliation; and therefore I shall add only one more test of your pretended friendship, a test of which is established by the great Founder of our religion, as infallibly decisive in this case; and that is, obedience, or the keeping of the commandments of God. This, I say, is established in the strongest terms by Jesus Christ himself, as a decisive test of love, *If you love me, keep my commandments.* John xiv. 15. *Then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* John xv. 14. *If any man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my saying.* John xiv. 23, 24. *This is the love of God, says St. John, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.* 1 John v. 3. That is, they are not grievous when love is the principle of obedience. The service of love is always willing and pleasing. Now, my brethren, bring your hearts and lives to this standard, and let conscience declare, Are there not some demands and restraints of the divine law so disagreeable to you, that you labour to keep yourselves ignorant of them, and turn every way to avoid the painful light of conviction? Are there not several duties which you know in your consciences to be such, which you do not so much as honestly endeavour to perform, but knowingly and wilfully neglect? And are there not some favourite sins which your consciences tell you God has forbidden, which yet are so pleasing to you, that you knowingly and allowedly indulge and practise them? If this be your case, you need not pretend to plead anything in your own defence, or hesitate any

longer; the case is plain, you are, beyond all doubt, enemies to God; you are undeniably convicted of it this day by irresistible evidence. You perhaps glory in the profession of Christians, but you are, notwithstanding, enemies to God. You attend on public worship, you pray, you read, you communicate, you are perhaps a zealous churchman or dissenter, but you are enemies of God. You have perhaps had many fits of religious affection, and serious concern about your everlasting happiness, but notwithstanding you are enemies of God. You may have reformed in many things, but you are still enemies of God. Men may esteem you Christians, but the God of heaven accounts you his enemies. In vain do you insist upon it, that you have never hated your maker all your life, but even tremble at the thought, for undeniable facts are against you; and the reason why you have not seen your enmity was, because you were blind, and judged upon wrong principles; but if you this day feel the force of conviction from the law, and have your eyes opened, you will see and be shocked at your horrid enmity against God, before yonder sun sets.

And now, when I have singled out from the rest those I am now to beseech to reconciliation with God, have I not got the majority of you to treat with? Where are the sincere lovers of God? Alas! how few are they? and how imperfect even in their love, so that they hardly dare call themselves lovers of God, but tremble lest they should still belong to the wretched crowd that are still unreconciled to him!

Ye rebels against the King of heaven! ye enemies against my Lord and Master Jesus Christ! (I cannot flatter you with a softer name) hear me; attend to the proposal I make to you, not in my own name, but in the name and stead of your rightful Sovereign; and that is, that you will this day be reconciled to God. "I pray you in his stead (that is all I can do) be ye reconciled to God." That you may know what I mean, I will more particularly explain this overture to you.

If you would be reconciled to God you must be deeply sensible of the guilt, the wickedness, the baseness, the inexpressible malignity of your enmity and rebellion against him. You must return to your rightful Sovereign as convicted, self-condemned, penitent, broken-hearted rebels, confounded and ashamed of your conduct, loathing yourselves because you have loathed the supreme Excellence, mourning over your unnatural disaffection, your base ingratitude, your horrid rebellion against so good a King. And what do you say to this article of the treaty of peace? Is it a hard thing for such causeless enemies to fall upon the knee, and to mourn and weep as prostrate penitents at the feet of their injured Maker? Is it a hard thing for one that has all his life been guilty of the blackest crimes upon earth, or even in hell, I mean

enmity against God, to confess “I have sinned,” and to feel his own confession? to feel it, I say; for if he does not feel it, his confession is but an empty compliment, that increases his guilt.

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you must heartily consent to be reconciled to him in Christ; that is, you must come in upon the footing of that act of grace which is published in the gospel through Christ, and expecting no favour at all upon the footing of your own goodness. The merit of what you call your good actions, of your repentance, your prayers, your acts of charity and justice, must all pass for nothing in this respect: you must depend only and entirely upon the merit of Christ’s obedience and sufferings as the ground of your acceptance with God; and hope for forgiveness and favour from his mere mercy bestowed upon you, only for the sake of Christ or on account of what he has done and suffered in the stead of sinners. The context informs you, that it is only in Christ that God is reconciling the world to himself; and consequently it is only in Christ that the world must accept of reconciliation and pardon. It does not consist with the dignity and perfections of the King of heaven to receive rebels into favour upon any other footing. I would have you consent to every article of the overture as I go along; and therefore here again I make a pause to ask you, what do you think of this article? Are you willing to comply with it, willing to come into favour with God, as convicted self-condemned rebels, upon an act of grace procured by the righteousness of Christ alone? Is it a mortification to creatures that never have done one action truly good in all their lives, because they have never loved God in one moment of their lives: creatures that have always, even in what they accounted their best dispositions, and best actions, been hateful to God, because even in their best dispositions, and best actions they were utterly destitute of his love? Is it a mortification to such creatures to renounce all their own merit, and consent to be saved only through grace, on account of the righteousness of another, even of Jesus Christ the great Peacemaker? Can it be a mortification to you to renounce what you have not, and to own yourselves guilty, and utterly unworthy, when you are really such? O! may I not expect your compliance with this term of reconciliation?

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you must engage yourselves in his service for the future, and devote yourselves to do his will. His law must be the rule of your temper and practice: whatever he commands you must honestly endeavour to perform, without exception of any one duty as disagreeable and laborious; and whatever he forbids, you must for that reason, abstain from, however pleasing, advantageous, or fashionable. You must no longer look upon yourself as your own, but as bought with a price, and therefore bound to glorify God with your souls and your bodies, which are his. And can you make any difficulty of complying with this term; of obeying

Him, whom the happy angels in heaven obey; of observing that law which always unites your duty and your happiness, and forbids nothing but what is itself injurious to you in the nature of things; of doing the will of the wisest and best of beings rather than your own, who are ignorant and depraved creatures? O! can you make any difficulty of this? If not, you will return home this day reconciled to God; a happiness you have never yet enjoyed for one moment.

Finally, If you would be reconciled to God, you must break off all friendship with his enemies; your friendship with the world, I mean your attachment to its wicked fashions and customs, and your fondness for its rebellious inhabitants, who continue enemies to God; your love of guilty pleasures, and every form of sin, however pleasing or gainful you might imagine it to be; your old habits and practices, while enemies to God; all these you must break off for ever; for your friendship with these is utterly inconsistent with the love of God. As long as you are resolved to love the world, to keep up your society with your old companions in sin, to retain your old pleasures and evil practices; as long, I say, as you are resolved upon this course, farewell all hope of your reconciliation to God: it is absolutely impossible. And do any of you hesitate at this article? Is sin so noble a thing in itself, and so happy in its consequences, as that you should be so loth to part with it? Is it so sweet a thing to you to sin against God, that you know not how to forbear? Alas! will you rather be an implacable enemy to the God that made you, than break your league with his enemies and your own? Do you love your sins so well, and are you so obliged to them, that you will lay down your life, your eternal life, for their sakes.

I might multiply particulars, but these are the principal articles of that treaty of peace, I am negotiating with you; and a consent to these includes a compliance with all the rest. And are you determined to comply? Does the heaven-born purpose now rise in your minds, “I am determined I will be an enemy of God no longer; but this very day I will be reconciled to God upon his own terms!” Is this your fixed purpose? or is there any occasion to pray and persuade you?

I well know, and it is fit you should now, that you are not able of yourselves to consent to these terms, but that it is the work of the power of God alone to reconcile you to himself; and that all my persuasions and entreaties will never make you either able or willing. You will then ask me, perhaps, “Why do I propose the terms to you, or use any persuasives or entreaties with you?” I answer, because you never will be sensible of your inability till you make an honest trial, and because you never will look and pray for the aid of the blessed Spirit till you are deeply sensible of your own insufficiency; and further, because, if the blessed Spirit should ever effectually work upon you,

it will be by enlightening understandings to see the reasonableness of the terms, and the force of the persuasives; and in this way, agreeably to your reasonable natures, sweetly constraining your obstinate wills to yield yourselves to God; therefore the terms must be proposed to you, and persuasives used, if I would be subservient to this divine agent, and furnish him with materials with which to work; and I have some little hope that he will, as it were, catch my feeble words from my lips before they vanish into air, and bear them home to your hearts with a power which you will not be able to resist. Finally, a conviction of the true state of your case may constrain you from self-love and the low principles of nature to use the means of reconciliation with zeal and earnestness; this you are capable of, even with the mere strength of degenerate nature; and it is only in this way of earnest endeavours that you have any encouragement to hope for divine aid; therefore, notwithstanding your utter impotence, I must pray, entreat, and persuade you to be reconciled to God.

I pray you, in the name of the great God your heavenly Father, and of Jesus Christ your Redeemer. If God should once more renew the thunder and lightning, and darkness and tempest of Sinai, and speak to you as he once did to the trembling Israelites; or if he should appear to you in all the amiable and alluring glories of a sin-pardoning reconcilable God, and pray you to be reconciled to him, would you not then regard the proposal? or if Jesus, who once prayed for you from the cross, should now pray to you from his throne in heaven, and beg you with his own gracious voice to be reconciled, O! could you disregard the entreaty? Surely no. Now the overture of peace is as really made to you by the blessed God and his Son Jesus Christ, as if it were expressly proposed to you by an immediate voice from heaven. For I beseech you, *as though God did beseech you*, by me, and it is *in Christ's stead*, that I pray you be *reconciled to God*. Therefore, however lightly you may make of a mere proposal of mine, can you disregard an overture from the God that made you, and the Saviour that bought you with his blood? in which I am but the faint echo of their voice from heaven.

In the name of God I pray you; the name of the greatest and best of beings; that name which angels love and adore, and which strikes terror through the hardest devil in the infernal regions; the name of your Father; the immediate Father of your spirits, and the Author of your mortal frames; the name of your Preserver and Benefactor, in whom you live, and move, and have your being; and who gives you life, and breath, and all things; the name of your rightful Sovereign and Lawgiver, who has a right to demand your love and obedience; the name of your supreme Judge, who will ascend the tribunal, and acquit or condemn you, as he finds you friends or foes; the name of that God, rich in goodness, who has replenished heaven with an infinite plenitude

of happiness in which he will allow you to share after all your hostility and rebellion, if you consent to overtures of reconciliation; in the name of that God of terrible majesty and justice, who has prepared the dungeon of hell as a prison for his enemies, where he holds in chains the mighty powers of darkness, and thousands of your own race, who persisted in that enmity to him of which you are now guilty, and with whom you must have your everlasting portion, if, like them, you continue hardened and incorrigible in your rebellion; in the name of that compassionate God, who sent his dear Son (O the transporting thought!) to satisfy divine justice for you by his death, and the precepts of the law by his life, and thus to remove all obstructions out of the way of your reconciliation on the part of God; in this great, this endearing and tremendous name, I pray you be reconciled to God. I pray you for his sake; and has this name no weight with you? Will you do nothing for his sake? what, not so reasonable and advantageous a thing as dropping your unnatural rebellion, and being reconciled to him? Is your contempt of God risen to that pitch that you will not do the most reasonable and profitable thing in the world, if he entreat you to do it? Be astonished, O ye heavens! at this.

I pray you both in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, the true friend of publicans and sinners, in his name and for his sake, who assumed your degraded nature, that he might dignify and save it; who lived a life of labour, poverty and persecution upon earth, that you might enjoy a life of everlasting happiness and glory in heaven; who died upon a torturing cross, that you might sit upon heavenly thrones; who was imprisoned in the gloomy grave, that you might enjoy a glorious resurrection; who fell a victim to divine justice, that you might be set free from its dreadful arrest; who felt trouble and agony of soul, that you might enjoy the smiles, the pleasures of divine love: who, in short, has discovered more ardent and extensive love for you than all the friends in the world can do: in his name, and for his sake, I pray you to be reconciled to God. And is his dear name a trifle in your esteem? Will you not do anything so reasonable and so necessary, and conducive to your happiness for his sake: for his sake who has done and suffered so much for you? Alas! has the name of Jesus no more influence among the creatures he bought with his blood? It is hard, indeed, if I beg in vain, when I beg for the sake of Christ, the Friend, the Saviour of perishing souls.

But if you have no regard for him, you certainly have for yourselves; therefore, for your own sakes, for the sake of your precious immortal souls, for the sake of your own everlasting happiness, I pray you to be reconciled to God. If you refuse, you degrade the honour of your nature, and commence incarnate devils. For what is the grand constituent of a devil, but enmity against God? You become the refuse of the creation, fit for no apartment of

the universe but the prison of hell. While you are unreconciled to God you can do nothing at all to please him. He that searches the heart knows that even your good actions do not proceed from love to him, and therefore he abhors them. Ten thousand prayers and acts of devotion and morality, as you have no principles of real holiness, are so many provocations to a righteous God. While you refuse to be reconciled, you are accessory to, and patronize all the rebellion of men and devils; for if you have a right to continue in your rebellion, why may not others? why may not every man upon earth? why may not every miserable ghost in the infernal regions? And are you for raising a universal mutiny and rebellion against the throne of the Most High? O the inexpressible horror of the thought! If you refuse to be reconciled, you will soon weary out the mercy and patience of God towards you, and he will come forth against you in all the terrors of an almighty enemy. He will give death a commission to seize you, and drag you to his flaming tribunal. He will break off the treaty, and never make you one offer of reconciliation more: he will strip you of all the enjoyments he was pleased to lend you, while you were under a reprieve, and the treaty was not come to a final issue; and will leave you nothing but bare being, and an extensive capacity of misery, which will be filled up to the uttermost from the vials of his indignation. He will treat you as his implacable enemy, and you shall be to him as Amalek, Exod. xvii. 16, with whom he will make war for ever and ever. He will reprove you, and set your sins in order before you, and tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver. He will meet you as a lion, “and as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of your hearts.” Hos. xiii. 8. He hath for a long time held his peace, and endured your rebellion; but ere long he will go forth as a mighty man: he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. Ah! he will ease him of his adversaries, and avenge him of his enemies. He will give orders to the executioners of his justice: *These mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.* Luke xix. 27. And now, if you will not submit to peace, prepare to meet your God, O sinners! gird up your loins like men; put on all the terror of your rage, and go forth to meet your almighty adversary, who will soon meet you in the field, and try your strength. Call the legions of hell to your aid, and strengthen the confederacy with all your fellow-sinners upon earth; put briers and thorns around you to enclose from his reach. Prepare the dry stubble to oppose devouring flame. Associate yourselves, but ye shall be broken in pieces: gird yourselves; but alas! ye shall be broken to pieces.

But O? I must drop this ironical challenge, and seriously pray you to make peace with him whom you cannot resist: then all your past rebellion will be forgiven; you shall be the favourites of your sovereign, and happy for ever;

and earth and heaven will rejoice at the conclusion of this blessed peace; and my now sad heart will share in the joy. Therefore, for your own sakes I pray you to be reconciled to God.