

31. This is not a matter of mere sensitive and popular impression; but in strict accordance with the views of a calm and intelligent jurisprudence. It enters into the very essence of our conception of a moral government, that it must have sanctions which could not have place, were there either to be no dispensation of rewards and punishments; or were the penalties, though denounced with all the parade and proclamation of law, to be never executed. It is not the lesson of conscience, that God would, under the mere impulse of a parental fondness for the creatures whom He had made, let down the high state and sovereignty which belong to Him; or that He would forbear the infliction of the penalty, because of any soft or timid shrinking from the pain it would give to the objects of His displeasure. There is nothing either in history or nature, which countenances such an imagination of the Deity, as that, in the relentings of mere tenderness, He would stoop to any weak or unworthy

problem of difficulty, how mercy can be so dispensed to a guilty world that the honours of the one attribute may be preserved, under the exercise and manifestation of the other. So that the question between one gospel sect or denomination and another, hangs upon an anterior question in natural theism. If we look on God only as a benign and affectionate parent, then we might imagine Him recalling His strayed children by a simple act of connivance. But if, instead of this, we look on God only as a judge and a moral governor, then might the dignity of this government seem to require that they should be irrecoverable outcasts from a kingdom whose laws they have violated. It were altogether worthy of a revelation from Heaven to unriddle this perplexity; and precisely as we are inclined to cherish the sentimental or the severe and sacred view of the Divinity, will either the apparatus of redemption be set at nought or will we welcome the tidings that unto us a Saviour has been born.