

has always seemed to be tinged with some angry rays. Indeed, so long as this is a sinful state, justice will not allow all the glories of the divine goodness to be revealed. And yet, through the glass which philosophy and faith have put into our hands, we can see that the disk is a full-orbed circle, and that no spots mar and darken its clear surface. How gloriously, then, when all those clouds shall have passed away, and the last taint of evil shall have been blotted out by the final conflagration, shall that sun, in the new heavens, send down its light and heat upon the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness!

On the other hand, how sad the prospect which the analogies of this subject open before him who misimproves his earthly probation, and goes out of the world unprepared for a higher and purer state of existence! If we can see reasons why on earth God should mingle goodness and severity in this man's lot, we can also see reasons why the manifestations of benevolence should all be withdrawn when he passes into a state of retribution. For if an individual can resist the mighty influences for good which the present state of discipline affords, and only become worse under them all, his case is utterly hopeless, and Heaven can do no more, consistently with the eternal principles of the divine government, to save him. Infinite benevolence gives him over, and no longer holds back the sword of retributive justice. Nay, the justice which inflicts the punishment is only benevolence in another form. And this it is that makes the infliction intolerable. How much more terrible to the wayward child are the blows inflicted by a weeping, affectionate father, than if received from an enemy! God is that affectionate Father; and he punishes only because he loves the universe more than the individual; and he has exhausted the stores of infinite mercy in vain to save him. Wicked men sometimes tell us that they are not afraid to trust themselves in the hands of infinite benevolence; whereas it is eminently this quality of the divine character which, above all others, they have reason to fear. For if, even in this world of probation and hope, God finds it necessary to mingle so much severity with goodness, what but a cup of unmingled bitterness shall be put into his hands who goes into eternity unrenewed and unpardoned, and finds that even infinite benevolence has become his eternal enemy!