

24 Although the establishment of a moral theory is not now our proper concern, we may nevertheless take the opportunity of expressing our dissent from the system of those who would resolve virtue, not into any native or independent rightness of its own, but into the will of Him who has a right to all our services. Without disparagement to the Supreme Being, it is not His law which constitutes virtue ; but, far higher homage both to Him and to His law, the law derives all its authority and its being from a virtue of anterior residence in the character of the Divinity. It is not by the authority of any law over Him, that truth and justice and goodness, and all the other perfections of supreme moral excellence, have, in His person, had their everlasting residence. He had a nature, before that He uttered it forth into a law. Previous to creation,

agitated question—the one contending for the moral liberty, and the other for the physical necessity of human actions—it is clear that there are many who hold the one to be destructive of the other. But what the wisdom of man cannot argumentatively harmonize in the world of speculation, the power and wisdom of God have executively harmonized in the world of realities—so that man, on the one hand, irresistibly feels himself to be an accountable creature ; and yet, on the other, his doings are as much the subject of calculation and of a philosophy, as many of those classes of phenomena in the material world, which, fixed and certain in themselves, are only uncertain to us, not because of their contingency, but because of their complication. We are not sure if the evolutions of the will are more beyond the reach of prediction than the evolutions of the weather. It is this union of the moral character with the historical certainty of our volitions, which has proved so puzzling to many of our controversialists ; but in proportion to the difficulty felt by us in the adjustment of these two elements, should be our admiration of that profound and exquisite skill which has mastered the apparent incongruity—so that while every voluntary action of man is, in point of reckoning, the subject of a moral, it is, in point of result, no less the subject of a physical law.