

their permanent individual or social happiness can be realized—which bespeaks the great Parent of the human family to be himself the lover and the exemplar of righteousness. In a word, it is not from an abstraction, but from the facts of a creation, that our lesson respecting the Divine character, itself a fact, is to be learned; and it is by keeping this distinction in view, that we obtain one important help for drawing from the very conflict and diversity of moral theories, on the nature of virtue, a clear, nay, a cumulative argument for the virtuous nature of the Godhead.

12. The painful suspicion is apt to intrude upon us, that virtue may not be a thing of any substance or stability at all—when we witness the confusion and the controversy into which moralists have fallen, on the subject of its elementary principles. But, to allay this feeling, it should be observed, in the first place, that, with all the perplexity which obtains on the question of what virtue, in the abstract or in its own essential and constituting quality, is—there is a pretty general agreement among moralists, as to what the separate and specific virtues of the human character are. According to the selfish system, temperance may be a virtue, because of its subservience to the good of the individual; while by the system of utility it is a virtue, because through its observation, our powers and services are kept entire for the good of society. But again, beside this controversy