

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, there existed in His mind, all those conceptions of the great and the graceful, which he hath embodied into a gorgeous universe; and of which every rude sublimity of the wilderness, or every fair and smiling landscape, gives such vivid representation. And in like manner, previous to all government, there existed in His mind those principles of righteousness, which afterwards, with the right of an absolute sovereign, He proclaimed into a law. Those virtues of which we now read on a tablet of jurisprudence were all transcribed and taken off from the previous tablet of the divine character. The law is but a reflection of this character. In the fashioning of law, He pictured forth Himself; and we, in the act of observing His law, are only