

test of right and wrong, we may affirm, on a more general view, that the rule itself is utterly unfitted to his capacity. Feeble as man may be, he forms a link in a chain of moral causes, ascending to the throne of God; and trifling as his individual acts may seem, he tries, in vain, to follow out their consequences as they go down into the countless ages of coming time. Viewed in this light, every act of man is woven into a moral system, ascending through the past—descending to the future—and preconceived in the mind of the Almighty. Nor does this notion, as far as regards ourselves, end in mere quietism and necessity. For we know right from wrong, and have that liberty of action which implies responsibility: and, as far as we are allowed to look into the ways of Providence, it seems to be compatible with his attributes to use the voluntary acts of created beings, as second causes in working out the ends of his own will. Leaving, however, out of question that stumbling block which the prescience of God has often thrown in the way of feeble and doubting minds, we are, at least, certain, that man has not foreknowledge to trace the consequences of a single action of his own; and, hence, that utility (in the highest sense of which the word is capable), is, as a test of right and wrong, unfitted to his understanding, and therefore worthless in its application.

By what right, either in reason or revelation, do we assert the simple and unconditional benevolence of God; and, on this assumption, go on to found a moral system and a rule of life? If he be a God of mercy, is he not also a God of justice? Sin and misery are often among the means of bringing about the ends of his providence; and are so