

“What are those initial presumptions which make it our duty to inquire?”

38. It is impossible to say how much or how little of evidence for a God may lie in these first surmisings, these vague and shadowy imaginations of the mind respecting Him. They serve a great moral purpose notwithstanding—whether when entertained and followed out by man they act as an impellent to further inquiry, or when resisted they fasten upon him the condemnation of impiety. An argument for the existence of a Divinity has been grounded on the fact of such being the universal impression. We may not be able precisely to estimate the argument; but this affects not the importance of the fact itself, as being a thing of mighty subservience to the objects of a Divine administration—bringing a moral force on the spirits of all men, and so bringing all within the scope of a judicial reckoning. This applies indeed to the whole system of Natural Theology. It may be of invaluable service, even though it fall short of convincing us. We may never thoroughly entertain the precise weight or amount of its proofs. But this does not hinder their actually being of a certain and substantive amount, whereupon follows a corresponding amount or aggravation of moral unfairness in our resistance of them—known to God though unknown to ourselves. Enough if it be such as to challenge our serious attention, though it may not challenge our full and definite belief—and whether Natural Theology has to offer such a proof on the side of religion as enables us absolutely to decide the question, yet high is the function which