

benevolence have no other prop to lean upon, and in its turn, it is far too doubtful a premise, on which to infer a coming immortality. Accordingly, to help out the argument, many of our slender and sentimental theists, who will admit of no other moral attribute for the divinity than the paternal attribute of kind affection for the creatures who have sprung from Him, do, in fact, assume the thing to be proved, and reason in a circle. The mere balance of the pleasures and pains of the present life, is greatly too uncertain, for what may be called an initial footing to this argument. But let a future life be assumed, in which all the defects and disorders of the present are to be repaired; and this may reconcile the doctrine of the benevolence of God, with the otherwise stumbling fact of the great actual wretchedness that is now in the world. Out of the observed phenomena of life and an assumed immortality together, a tolerable argument may be raised for this most pleasing and amiable of all the moral characteristics; but it is obvious that the doctrine of immortality enters into the premises of this first argument. But how is the immortality itself proved? not by the phenomena of life alone, but by these phenomena taken in conjunction with the divine benevolence—which benevolence, therefore, enters into the premise of the second argument. In the one argument, the doctrine of immortality is required to prove the benevolence of God. In the other, this benevolence is required to prove the immortality. Each is used as an assumption for the establishment of the other; and this nullifies the reasoning for both.