

an auxiliary as calculated to give a mystical and arbitrary character to the Philosophy of Religion; and hold it a far better offering to the cause, when it is palpably made to rest on no other principles than those which are recognised and read of all men.

CHAPTER V.

On the Hypothesis that the World is Eternal.

1. BUT after all it may be asked, Is the world an effect? May it not have lasted for ever—and might not the whole train of its present sequences have gone on in perpetual and unvaried order from all eternity? In our reasoning upon antecedents and consequents, we have presumed that the world is a consequent. Could we be sure of this, it may be thought—then on the principle of our last chapter, let the adaptation of its parts to so many thousand desirable objects be referred, and on the basis of a multiplied experience too, to a designing cause as its strict and proper antecedent. But how do we know the world to be a consequent at all? Is there any greater absurdity in supposing it to have existed as it now is, at any specified point of time throughout the millions of ages that are past, than that it should so exist at this moment? Does what we suppose might have been then, imply any greater absurdity, than what we actually see to be at present? Now might not