OF the
Principles and Duties
OF
NATURAL RELIGION:
TWO BOOKS.

By the Right Reverend Father in
God, JOHN late Lord Bishop of CHESTER.

John Wilkins, by oxchester

To which is added, A SERMON
Preached at his Funerals, by WILLIAM
LLOYD, D. D. Dean of BANGOR, and
Chaplain in Ordinary to His MA-
JESTY.

LONDON,
Printed by A. Maxwell, for T. Basset, H. Brant, R. Chessell,
at the George in Fleeetstreet, the Gun at the West-
end of St. Pauls, and the Rees and Crown in
St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1675.
The Preface.

The certainty of this present Life. And surely nothing is more likely to prevail with wise and considerate men, to become Religious, than to be thoroughly convinced, that Religion and Happiness, our Duty and our Interest, are really but one and the same thing considered under several notions.

J. Tillotson.

The Planet and itsしっかりとの

The Contents.

First Book:

Of the Reasonableness of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion.

Chap. I.

Concerning the several kinds of Evidence and Assent.

Chap. II.

Two Schemes of Principles, relating to Practical things, whether Natural or Moral, proposed, in the method used by Mathematicians, of Postulata, Definitions and Axioms.

Chap.
The Contents.

Chap. III.
Some Propositions necessary to be premised for the removing of several prejudices in debates about Religion. p. 22.

Chap. IV.
Concerning the Existence of a Deity; and the Arguments for it. 1. Arg. From the Universal Consent and agreement of Mankind: And the Objections against it answered. p. 36.

Chap. V.

Chap. VI.
3. Arg. From the admirable Contrivance of Natural things. p. 78.

Chap. VII.

Chap. VIII.
Concerning the Excellencies and Perfections of the Divine Nature: And first, of those which are commonly called Incommunicable, namely, Simplicity, Unity, Immutability, Infiniteness, Eternity. p. 100.

Chap. IX.

Chap. X.
Of the Perfections relating to the Divine Will; Goodness, Justice, Faithfulness. p. 135.

Chap. XI.
Of the Perfections belonging to the Powers and faculties of Acting, viz. Power, Dominion, Distribution of future Rewards and Punishments. p. 143.
The Contents.

Chap. XII.

Chap. XIII.
Of Faith or Affiance. p. 179.

Chap. XIV.
Of Love. p. 200.

Chap. XV.
Of Reverence and Fear. p. 216.

Chap. XVI.
Of Active Obedience to the Laws of God. p. 227.

Chap. XVII.
Of Passive Obedience: or Patience and Submission to the Will of God. p. 339.

SECOND BOOK.

Of the Wisdom of Practising the Duties of Natural Religion.

Chap. I.
Shewing in general, how Religion conduces to our happiness. p. 285.

Chap. II.
How it conduces to our present Happiness in this world: And first to the happiness of the Outward-man. In respect of Health. p. 314.

Chap. III.
In respect of Liberty, Safety, and Quiet. p. 324.

Chap. IV.
In respect of our Estates and Possessions. p. 330.

Chap.
The Contents.

Chap. V.
In respect of Pleasure or the cheerful enjoyment of outward blessings. p. 344.

Chap. VI.
In respect of Honour and Reputation. p. 353.

Chap. VII.
How Religion conduces to the Happiness of the Inward-man. As it tends to the perfecting and regulating of our Faculties, and to the Peace and tranquility of our minds. p. 372.

Chap. VIII.
How Religion conduces to our Happiness in the next World. p. 398.

Chap. IX.
The conclusion of the whole, shewing the excellency of the Christian Religion and the advantages of it, both as to the knowledge and practice of our Duty, above the mere Light of Nature. p. 394.

THE FIRST BOOK:
Shewing
The Reasonableness of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion.

CHAP. I.
Concerning the several kinds of Evidence and Assent.

I Intend, by Gods assistance, in this First Book, to treat concerning the Reasonableness and the Credibility of the Principles of Natural Religion, in opposition to that Humour of Scepticism and Insidelity, which hath of late so much abounded in the world, not only amongst sensual men of the vulgar sort, but even amongst those who pretend to a more than ordinary measure of wit and learning.
Of the Principles, &c. Lib.I.

In my entrance upon this work, I am sensible of what ill consequence it may be, to lay the stress of a weighty cause upon weak or obscure Arguments, which instead of convincing men, will rather burden and confirm them in their Errors.

And therefore I cannot but think my self obliged in the management of this Argument, to use my utmost caution and endeavour, that it be done with so much strength and perspicuity, as may be sufficient to convince any man, who hath but an ordinary capacity, and an honest mind, which are no other qualifications than what are required to the institution of men, in all kinds of Arts and Sciences whatsoever.

In order to this, I judge it expedient to premise something concerning the several kinds and degrees of Evidence and Assent, and to lay down some common principles, which may serve as a foundation to the following Discourse.

The several ways whereby men come to the knowledge or belief of any thing without immediate Revelation, are either by such Evidence of things as is more

Simple, relating to the

Senses,

Outward.

Inward.

Understanding, arising either from the

Nature of the things in themselves.

Testimony of others concerning them.

Mixed, relating both to the Senses and Understanding.

I. By Senses I mean those faculties whereby we are enabled to discern and know such particular objects as are present. These are either

1. Outward, by which we can apprehend external objects, as when we see, or hear, or touch any thing presented to us.

2. Inward, by which we can discern internal objects, and are conscious to our selves, or sensible both of the impressions that are made upon our outward senses, and of the inward motions of our minds; namely, our apprehensions, inclinations, and the power of determining our selves, as to our own Actions; and by which we can at any time be assured of what we think, or what we desire, or purpose.

II. By
Chap. I. Of Natural Religion.

II. By Understanding, I mean that faculty whereby we are enabled to apprehend the objects of knowledge, generals as well as particulars, absent things as well as present; and to judge of their truth or falsity, good or evil.

That kind of Evidence may be said to arise from the nature of things, when there is such a congruity or incongruity betwixt the terms of a proposition, or the deductions of one proposition from another, as doth either satisfy the mind, or else leave it in doubt and hesitation about them.

That kind of Evidence is said to arise from testimony, when we depend upon the credit and relation of others for the truth or falsehood of any thing. There being several things which we cannot otherwise know, but as others do inform us of them. As namely matters of fact, together with the account of persons and places at a distance. Which kind of Evidence will be more or less clear, according to the authority and credit of the witnesses.

Besides these, there is a mixed kind of Evidence relating both to the senses and understanding, depending upon our own observation and repeated trials of the issues and events of actions or things, called experience.

These are the several kinds of evidence, whereby we attain to the knowledge or belief of things.

The kinds of assent proceeding from them are reducible to these two heads.

I. Knowledge or Certainty, which may be distinguished into three kinds, which I crave leave to call by the names of

- Physical.
- Mathematical.
- Moral.

II. Opinion or Probability.

I. That kind of assent which doth arise from such plain and clear Evidence, as doth not admit of any reasonable cause of doubting, is called knowledge or certainty.

I. I call that physical certainty which doth depend upon the evidence of sense, which is the first and highest kind of evidence, of which humane nature is capable.

Nothing can be more manifest and plain to me, than that I now see somewhat which hath the appearance of such a colour or figure, than that I have in my mind.
mind such a thought, desire or purpose, and do feel within myself a certain power of determining my own actions, which is called Liberty.

To say that we cannot tell whether we have Liberty, because we do not understand the manner of Volition, is all one as to say, That we cannot tell whether we see or hear, because we do not understand the manner of sensation.

He that would go about to confute me in any of these Apprehensions, ought to bring a Medium that is better known, and to derive his Argument from somewhat that is more evident and certain than these things are, unless he can think to overthrow and confute that which is more plain and certain, by that which is less plain and certain, which is all one, as to go about to out-weigh a heavy body by somewhat that is lighter, or to attempt the proving of ten to be more than eleven, than which nothing can be more absurd.

2. I call that Mathematical Certainty, which doth more eminently belong to Mathematical things, not intending hereby to exclude such other matters as are capable of the like certainty; namely, all such simple abstracted beings, as in their own

Chap. i. Of Natural Religion.

own natures do lie so open, and are so obvious to the understanding, that every man's judgment (though never so much prejudiced) must necessarily assent to them. 'Tis not possible for any man in his wits, (though never so much addicted to Paradoxes) to believe otherwise, but that the whole is greater than the part; That contradictions cannot be both true; That three and three make six; That four is more than three.

There is such a kind of Connexion betwixt the Terms of some Propositions, and some Deductions are so necessary as must unavoidably enforce our assent. There being an evident necessity that some things must be so, or not so, according as they are affirmed or denied to be, and that supposing our faculties to be true, they cannot possibly be otherwise, without implying a Contradiction.

3. I call that Moral Certainty, which hath for its object such beings as are less simple, and do more depend upon mixed circumstances. Which though they are not capable of the same kind of Evidence with the former, so as to necessitate every man's assent, though his judgment be never so much prejudiced against them; yet may they be so plain, that
every man whose judgment is free from prejudice will content unto them. And though there be no natural necessity, that such things must be so, and that they cannot possibly be otherwise, without implying a Contradiction; yet may they be so certain as not to admit of any reasonable doubt concerning them.

Under each of these Heads there are several Propositions which may be styled Self-evident and First Principles.

Self-evident, because they are of themselves so plain, as not to be capable of proof from any thing that is clearer or more known.

First Principles, because they cannot be proved a priori; That which is first can have nothing before it.

Only they may receive some kind of Illustration, by Instances, and Circumstances, and by such Universal effects as do proceed from them; and from the monstrous Absurdities that will follow upon the denial of them.

Such deductions as do necessarily flow from these Principles have the same kind of Certainty, whether Physical, Mathematical, or Moral, with the Principles themselves from which they are deduced.

The two first of these, namely, Physical and

Chap. 1. Of Natural Religion.

and Mathematical Certainty may be styled Infallible; and Moral Certainty may properly be styled Infallible.

By Infallible Certainty, I do not mean absolute infallibility, because that is an Incommunicable Attribute. And it were no less than a blasphemous arrogance, for any man to pretend to such a perfect unerring judgment on which the divine power itself could not impose. But I mean a Conditional infallibility, that which supposes our faculties to be true, and that we do not neglect the exerting of them. And upon such a supposition there is a necessity that some things must be so as we apprehend them, and that they cannot possibly be otherwise.

By indubitable Certainty, I mean that which doth not admit of any reasonable cause of doubting, which is the only certainty of which most things are capable; and this may properly be ascribed both to that kind of evidence arising from the Nature of things, and likewise to that which doth arise from Testimony, or from Experience.

I am from the nature of the things themselves Morally certain, and cannot make any doubt of it, but that a mind free from passion and prejudice is more fit to
Of the Principles, &c. Lib. I.

to pass a true judgment, than such a one as is bypassed by affections and interests. That there are such things as Virtue and Vice. That Mankind is naturally designed for a sociable life. That it is most agreeable to reason and the common interests of those in society, that they should be true to their Compacts, that they should not hurt an innocent person, &c.

And as for the evidence from Testimony which depends upon the credit and authority of the Witnesses, these may be so qualified as to their ability and fidelity, that a man must be a fantastical incredulous fool to make any doubt of them. And by this it is that I am sufficiently assured, That there was such a person as Queen Elizabeth; That there is such a place as Spain.

And so for the evidence of Experience, I am by that to a great degree assured of the succession of Night and Day, Winter and Summer. And have no such reason to doubt, whether the house wherein now I am, shall this next minute fall upon me, or the earth open and swallow it up, as to be in continual fear of such accidents.

II. That kind of Assent which doth arise from such evidence as is less plain and clear, clear, is called Opinion and Probability. When though the proofs for a thing may preponderate any thing to be said against it, yet they are not so weighty and perspicuous as to exclude all reasonable doubt and fear of the contrary.

And this doth arise from a more imperfect and obscure representation and conception of things, either by our Senses or Understandings, by Testimony or by Experience.

When the Evidence on each side doth equiponderate, this doth not properly beget any Assent, but rather a Hesitation or suspension of Assent.