

## The Works Of the late Right Honorable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke

In Five Volumes, complete.

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XXXV.

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imaginations. Truth warms their brains; error that paffes for it turns them. Thus christianity became fanaticism, even in the first professors of it. Thus artificial theology grew up as fast as men began to teach the doctrine of Christ, like a revelation made fo obscurely and imperfectly, that they who were to publish it were to explain it, and not only to explain it, but to supply the deficiencies of it; and some will be apt to think that the first of these men was PAUL. Divines would be furious to hear fuch language held as I hold to you. But they would be under great difficulties to evade the charge, and, therefore, the more furious; fince I could eafily produce passages out of the most renowned of the fathers, and out of their own writings, as extravagant as any in the Talmud, as abfurd as any in the Koran, and quite fit to hold their places in one of Borri's letters: and fince the whole ecclefiaftical hiftory is an hiftory of the intollerance and violence of christians to one another, on such points as these, from the time they had it in their power to be intollerant and to perfecute. You will not expect a bead-roll of thefe doctrines and disputes. It will be sufficient to shew how they had the effects, that have been mentioned, both in natural and revealed religion.

## XXXV.

CLARKE observes that there is now no such thing as a consistent scheme of theism. A complete one, such an one as presumes to account for the whole order and state of things relatively to God and man, I believe there is not. But how does the learned writer make out his proposition? That of the best heathen philosophers, which alone was such, ceases now to be so, he says, after the appearance of N n 2 revelation;

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revelation; because it directly conducts men to the belief of christianity. If he intends the focratical and platonic scheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unless it be true that a scheme which appears sometimes dogmatical and fometimes sceptical, that favors monotheism and polytheism in the fame breath, as it were, may be confiftent. If this scheme led to christianity in any fort, as I think it did, this was due not to the confistency, but the inconfistency of it. Several of it's doctrines were adopted into articles of faith by christianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew feveral of these philosophers into christianity: and this rejection made feveral averse to it. JUSTIN died to maintain it. Porphyry would have died to oppose it. That platonifm was a confiftent scheme, or that it conducted men directly to christianity, is not true therefore. But it is very true, that the method of reasoning à priori, from heaven, if I may fay so, that we do not know, to earth, instead of reasoning from earth that we do know, to heaven, was introduced into christianity with doctrines which the fame method had broached in paganism; that this method continued to be in common that of those who embraced the christian profession, and of those who opposed it; and that it propagated fanaticism alike in both, as every man who compares, for inflance, St. Austin and Plotinus together with indifference, which every man should do in such a case, must confess.

CHRISTIAN fanaticism was more catching, and in that respect more dangerous than the other. Some of the heathen faints pretended to ravishments, to extasses, to occasional unions with the supreme intelligence, and to revelation. But those of christianity had, besides all these advantages, the word of God himself to produce against unbelievers, and they hawled

hawled this word fo well to their purposes (the expression is St. [EROM's\*) that every fide appealed to it in the disputes they had with one another. The confequence was, that every fide damned all the rest, and, which was really worse, perfecuted them in this world. The heathens exercised great violence against one another in their quarrels about their secular interests; but religion neither caused nor fomented them: whereas the quarrels of this kind were the most frequent and the most inveterate among christians. They broke not only the bonds of alliance between nations, but those of kindred in families, and those of friendship where it was the most intimate. Such quarrels turned frequently on metaphyfical speculations which no fide understood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. These were the objects that engroffed, with those of ecclesiastical power and wealth, the whole attention of the church, and, under her influence, almost the whole attention of the state, as it appears by the behaviour of the roman emperors after Constan-TIME, fome of whom feemed to have no other concern in the greatest distress of that empire, and in the very moment of it's fall. Nay, there is mention made of one who had a feruple of conscience, about the time he spent in secular affairs, and the government of his people. Thus reformation of manners was the concern of no body: and whilft the utmost diffolution of them was practifed and indulged by the clergy, men were persecuted, at their instigation, for the least supposed error in forms of speech, or in forms of worship; and injustice and murder were made duties of religion on this account. Is there not fufficient reason now to affert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and shook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology?

\* Trahere scripturas.

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Sociability is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter: and yet when men have accustomed themselves to think of the Supreme Being, as of an human legislator and governor, and to ascribe to the all-perfect Being the same ideas, the same fentiments, affections, and passions, that they perceive in themfelves; they may eafily come to imagine, or to make others imagine him as intent to preserve the outward forms of his court, as the most effential laws of his government; and themfelves as much bound at least to be good courtiers as good fubjects. They may think themselves surest to please in the first of these characters. On a confidence in the merit of it, they may not only neglect the duties of the other, but they may facrifice, to a falfe notion of honoring the prince, the fundamental laws, and the constitution of his government. They may think, or they may represent themselves to be his favorites, and they may treat even his best subjects as rebels, by virtue of laws which his ministers make, and which he is supposed to authorise.

This allusion to the abuses of civil government, in the kingdoms of earthly monarchs, gives a true image of those which have always prevailed in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, to the subversion of it's original constitution: and with this allusion I shall finish this head.

## XXXVI.

DUT I have undertaken to shew further, that artificial theology, which has shaken the foundations of natural religion, has laid revealed religion much more open to the attacks of