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PADERBORN

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

In Five Volumes, complete.

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

London, 1754

XXXV.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-60777](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-60777)

revelation; because it directly conducts men to the belief of christianity. If he intends the focratical and platonick scheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unless it be true that a scheme which appears sometimes dogmatical and sometimes sceptical, that favors monotheism and polytheism in the same breath, as it were, may be consistent. If this scheme led to christianity in any sort; as I think it did, this was due not to the consistency, but the inconsistency of it. Several of it's doctrines were adopted into articles of faith by christianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew several of these philosophers into christianity: and this rejection made several averse to it. JUSTIN died to maintain it. PORPHYRY would have died to oppose it. That platonism was a consistent 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 say 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 same 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 instance, 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 saints pretended to ravishments, to extasies, 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
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hauled this word so well to their purposes (the expression is St. JEROM'S*) that every side appealed to it in the disputes they had with one another. The consequence was, that every side damned all the rest, and, which was really worse, persecuted 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 metaphysical speculations which no side understood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. These were the objects that engrossed, 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 CONSTANTINE, some of whom seemed 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 scruple 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 whilst the utmost dissolution of them was practised 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 sufficient reason now to assert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and shook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology?

* Trahere scripturas.

SOCIA-

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 sentiments, affections, and passions, that they perceive in themselves; they may easily come to imagine, or to make others imagine him as intent to preserve the outward forms of his court, as the most essential laws of his government; and themselves as much bound at least to be good courtiers as good subjects. 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 sacrifice, to a false 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 authorize.

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 its original constitution: and with this allusion I shall finish this head.

XXXVI.

BUT 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
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