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

In Five Volumes, complete.

**Bolingbroke, Henry St. John**

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XLIII.

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ing; and such it is in a false sense. It cannot be such in a true one; since their ideas of these attributes are very human ideas, applied arbitrarily to the divine nature, not founded in any knowledge of it that they have really. No matter. They have accustomed men to this absurd imposition, and they proceed. Both of them pretend to be led from proposition to proposition down to their different conclusions. But the truth is, that they have their different conclusions from the first in view. The promises, wherein they concur so amicably, are plainly contrived to establish such notions of the moral attributes of God as shall appear repugnant to what we see and feel and know, when they are applied to the constitution of the world and to the state of mankind in it: whereas it is from this constitution and this state alone, that we can acquire any ideas of the divine attributes, or a right to affirm any thing about them. When they have done this, a COLLINS concludes, that there is no God; and a CLARKE, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

LET us proceed in another method, argue from knowledge not from imagination, and advance nothing more than the former will justify. The former will justify enough to refute abundantly the two allies.

## XLIII.

THE demonstration of God's existence is founded in knowledge, and pursued with intuitive certainty through every step of it. This the divine will admit; and this the atheist is so little able to deny, that he has recourse to cavil, as it has been said already, and endeavors vainly to unravel the thread he cannot break. I assume, therefore, nothing more than what is proved, when I assert, that the Su-

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preme Being is infinitely wise as well as powerful : and if he be infinitely wise, I need not stand to prove, that he always knows and always does that which is fittest to be done. To chuse the best end, and to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wisdom. Two things are then evident. One, that since infinite wisdom determined to call into existence every being that does exist, and to constitute that universal system, which we call the system of nature, it was right and fit that infinite power should be exercised for this purpose. The other, that since infinite wisdom not only established the end but directed the means, the system of the universe must be necessarily the best of all possible systems, which it could not be, nor even a consistent scheme, unless the whole was the final cause of every part, and no one nor more parts the final causes of the whole. The universe is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, if we may judge by our own, contains several ; and every one of these again, if we may judge by our own, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking, rational and irrational, different natures designed for different purposes, but all concurring in that of one common system, as we discern in too many instances not to have reason to believe it in all. Just so it is with respect to the various systems, and systems of systems, that compose the universe. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tyed together by relations and connexions, by gradations and dependencies. The great material parts of our solar system act on one another in more ways than philosophy has been yet able to discover, and that of comets is not, perhaps, the only communication that other systems have with ours. Unthinking matter is dispersed in various forms throughout the universe : and we see a gradation of them in the world we inhabit, from stones and other inert

inert bodies, up to vegetables and such as have in themselves, however inanimate, a natural tho not spontaneous activity. So may we believe most reasonably that various forms of thinking substance, or the faculties of sense and thought in various degrees, are dispersed likewise throughout the universe. We observe a gradation of them here, and we may well persuade ourselves, that there is a gradation of them through various ranks of beings, from the lowest degrees in our world to the highest in some other.

I pretend not to dogmatise; but without having so much presumption I may say, that the notions here advanced seem much more conformable to those of a Supreme Being, and to all our ideas of order, than the contrary. They are probable in speculation, and the appearances of things are favorable to them: whilst the hypothesis that assumes the world, and did formerly assume the whole universe, made for man, and man solely to be happy, is not founded in reason, and is contradicted by experience. By the constitution of the material, and by that of the intellectual world, more dependent on the former perhaps than we are willing to believe, the human race is exposed to various evils, permanent and contingent, physical and moral. Of this philosophers have complained in all ages. This they could not reconcile to the goodness and justice of a God, such as they conceived him, nor on their principles: and therefore, they cut the knot by denying him, or threw themselves into an endless labyrinth of disputation by the acknowledgement of him. But on such principles as are here laid down, and in the truth of things most certainly, there is no ground for complaint, and there is abundant cause to give thanks. Tho this world, and much more the universe, were not made for the sake of man, and tho infinite wisdom contrived, and infinite power executed the stupendous work for some nobler end,

end, and some greater purpose, than the advantage of one poor vain mortal creature; yet has not the care of man been neglected in it. "In primâ illâ constitutione," says *SENECA*\* speaking of the world as the work of the gods, "cum universa disponent, etiam nostra videntur, rationemque hominibus habuerunt:" which opinion, so little consistent with the doctrine he teaches elsewhere, is far more reasonable. We labor hard, we complicate various means to arrive at one end: and several systems of conduct are often employed by us to bring about some one paltry purpose. But God neither contrives, nor executes, like man. His means are simple, his purposes various: and the same system that answers the greatest, answers the least. Thus regard has been had to man, and not to him alone, but to all other animals, according to their different natures and ends.

*INFINITE* wisdom appears everywhere. Every new discovery, and how many and how marvellous have these been! is a new proof of this wisdom, as well as of the power of God. The power of executing is seen in every instance, and tho we cannot discern the wisdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our observation in every instance, yet we see them in so many that it becomes the highest absurdity not to acknowledge them in all. They, who do not acknowledge them so, judge of the proceedings of an all-perfect Being (for even the atheist disputes, on this occasion, for argument's sake, on the supposition that there is one) as they would not judge of those of a prince or minister of state, who had acquired and deserved, by a long course of political conduct, the reputation of wisdom. These they would not dare to pronounce unwise in any case, because they saw the measures im-

\* De Benef. L. 6.

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perfectly, and because the ends were unknown to them. Yet thus they judge with respect to God. "Why does the rain pour down into the sea, whilst the sandy deserts of Lybia are parched with drought? Why do wintry storms happen in the summer, and irregular seasons destroy our harvests?" Such questions as these have been often asked, and all of them relatively to man. They have been answered in many instances by new discoveries, after the deaths of those who asked them: and posterity has been convinced, tho they did not live to be so, that when they triumphed in them, they triumphed in their ignorance. DEMOCRITUS, EPICURUS, STRATO, ALPHONSUS of CASTILE, in short all the makers and menders of worlds, shewed nothing but their ignorance and their presumption. They attempted to rise above God, and they are become the jest of mankind.

THO I think that the moral attributes of the Supreme Being are absorbed, as I expressed myself before, in his wisdom, that we should consider them only as different modifications of this physical attribute, whatever ideas we may frame on the phaenomena, and that we must always talk precariously and impertinently when we presume to apply our ideas of them to the appearances of things; yet I think it proper to shew the divine and the atheist that even the goodness of God is not hard to defend against them both, by every one who denys, as every one may most reasonably, the question they beg, and grant in consequence of their alliance to one another.

THE wisdom is not so often discernible by us, as the power of God, nor the goodness as the wisdom. But a multitude of the phaenomena being conformable to our ideas of goodness, we may reason about it as we did just now about the divine wisdom. If our adversaries shew that men are exposed

posed to many physical and moral evils, we can shew much more good of both kinds that God has bestowed on us, or put it into our power to procure to ourselves. The evils we complain of are constant or occasional effects of the constitution of a world that was not made for our sakes. But the means to soften some to prevent others, and to palliate and even to cure those that cannot be prevented are so many instances of the positive goodness of God, which ought to be brought to account and set against the evils with greater gratitude and more fairly than they are by men who pass them slightly over, whilst they descend into every particular of the other sort, aggravate the least and declaim pathetically and partially on all.

IT would be easy to confirm and illustrate, what is advanced in the physical part by numerous and unanswerable proofs, which are to be found in the writings of natural philosophers. These men have done more service to true theism than all the metaphysical reasoners à priori: or to say something stronger and equally true, they have done it more service than divines and atheists in confederacy have done it hurt. It is impossible to read, with attention and without prejudice, what the former have writ, and not to be convinced by fact, and by reason grounded on fact, not on hypothesis, first that we ought to consider the world we inhabit no otherwise than as a little wheel in our solar system; nor our solar system any otherwise than as a little but larger wheel in the immense machine of the universe; and both the one and the other necessary perhaps to the motion of the whole and to the pre-ordained revolutions in it: nor without being convinced, secondly, that the wisdom, or, if you had rather say so, the goodness of God has provided amply for the well-being of man in this world, and of the whole animal kind, who are  
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objects of the divine care as well as he, according to their various destinations. In fine, and to take away every atheistical subterfuge; whether we say, that the several species of animals were the final causes of these things, which seem particularly adapted to the use of each; or whether we say, that the world was made such as it is, without any regard to them; the proofs of divine wisdom and goodness will be equally strong: for if the world was made for the universe only, and without any regard to its future inhabitants, this wisdom and goodness were exercised as much in fitting these inhabitants to live commodiously in a world already made, as they could have been in making a world on purpose for them.

BUT we are not to think in this manner of the divine proceedings, nor to imagine that in them one plan succeeded another. Both were alike present to the mind of God. Our planet might have been, even uninhabited, very fit for all the mechanical purposes of it in the material system. But there might be other purposes, which the creation of animals was necessary to answer: and since they were created, we ought to think that they were so for some purpose. It might be determined in the divine ideas, that there should be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the universe. In this case, it was necessary that there should be some creatures at our pitch of rationality, and others endued with all the degrees of life, sense, and intellect, which we observe in the several species from the insect up to man. This world might be allotted to such kinds and orders of animated beings: and tho it was made for the universe, not for them, some regard might be had to them, and to their well-being in the constitution of it. They were not made to be miserable. But even man was not made to be happier than it was consistent with this part of

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the material system, and with his own rank in the intellectual, that he should be.

## XLIV.

THE truth is, that when we contemplate the phaenomena, we cannot fail to discern, unless we live in a mist of metaphysics, how repugnant to them it is to affirm, that the world was made for the sake of man alone. Some modern divines have been candid enough to give up the point. Archbishop KING at least, in his Essay on the original of evil, saw so plainly that even the natural and real attributes of God, even his wisdom and his power, could not be otherwise defended against the cavils of atheism and of theology, that he scrupled not to declare the opinion to be absurd, and what no one would object, who was not blinded with pride and ignorance\*. But we discern at the same time in the contemplation of the phaenomena, that this world is accommodated in certain respects to the utility of the animals it contains, and that their natures are adapted in many more to the nature of the world. Thus the oblique position of the earth, by the inclination of it's axis to the plane of the ecliptic, makes a more equal distribution of the sun's heat throughout the year, and in the different zones or climates, than there could be in any other position. Thus again, men and all other species of animals are fitted for different climates and different elements, wherein they find the nourishment and the employment proper to their different natures. The animal kind may seem to be a final cause of the first. The constitution of the

\* C. 4. Sec. 2.

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