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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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XLIV.

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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.

world

world is evidently the reason of the last. I descend into no more particulars. You will find an abundance of them collected by RAY, DERHAM, NIEUENTYT, and other writers, wherein the power and wisdom of God in the whole creation are displayed: and such proofs are brought that man and every species of the animal kind are fitted, in their very formation, for their state here, as nothing but the most irrational obstinacy can resist. The minutest instances are decisive, and those which seem the most obvious, because the most common, appear on a closer inspection not less astonishing than the greatest phaenomena, and the more remote from observation. The animal eye, for instance, is not less astonishing in it's various situations, motions and particular uses, than the eye of the world the sun. To these writings let me refer you. Natural philosophy, thus applied, leads irresistibly to natural theology, and gives a just contempt for the figments and hypotheses of artificial. Read, contemplate, adore, give thanks, and be resigned.

METHINKS I hear a sincere and devout theist, in the midst of such meditations as these, cry out, "no, the world was not made for man, nor man only to be happy. The objections urged by atheists and divines against the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, on these arbitrary suppositions, destroy their own foundations. Mankind is exposed, as well as other animals, to many inconveniencies and to various evils, by the constitution of the world. The world was not, therefore, made, for him, nor he only to be happy. But he enjoys numberless benefits, by the fitness of his nature to this constitution, unasked, unmerited, freely bestowed: and tho he returns, like other animals, to the dust, yet neither he nor they are willing to leave the state where in they are placed here. The wisdom and the goodness of

" God are therefore manifest. I thank thee, O my Creator!
 " that I am placed in a rank, low in the whole order of
 " being, but the first in that animal system to which I be-
 " long: a rank wherein I am made capable of knowing thee,
 " and of discovering thy will, the perfection of my own na-
 " ture, and the means of my own happiness. Far be it from
 " me to repine at my present state, like those who deny
 " thee; or like those who own thee, only to censure thy
 " works, and the dispensations of thy providence. May I
 " enjoy thankfully the benefits bestowed on me by thy divine
 " liberality. May I suffer the evils to which I stand exposed,
 " patiently, nay willingly. None of thy creatures are made
 " to be perfectly happy, like thyself; nor did thy goodness
 " require that they should be so. Such of them as are more
 " worthy objects of it than thy human creatures, superior na-
 " tures that inhabit other worlds, may be affected in some
 " degree or other by physical evils, since these are effects of
 " the general laws of matter and motion. They must be af-
 " fected too in some degree or other by moral evil, since mo-
 " ral evil is the consequence of error as well as of disorderly ap-
 " petites and passions, and since error is the consequence of
 " imperfect understanding. Less of this evil may prevail
 " among them. But all that is finite, the most exalted in-
 " telligences, must be liable to some errors. Thou O God!
 " art alone that being who is liable to none, and to whom
 " infallibility and impeccability belong."

Duc me, parens celsique dominator poli,
 Quocumque placuit. Nulla parendi mora est.
 Assum impiger*.

* SEN. Ep. 107.

SHALL

SHALL we suppose now that an atheist and a divine break in upon the theist, and interrupt his pious meditations by insisting still, like the echoes of EPICURUS, that if there is a God he must be infinitely good as well as wise and powerful, and by asking then how it comes to pass that there is any evil in the world? How it comes to pass that the happiness of man is not more complete, and better provided for in it? Our theist would not be embarrassed. His answer would be more ready than their reply. Their first absurdity consists in this, that they apply their notions of goodness to the divine nature; and the second is this that the argument they raise on these notions proves a great deal too much. Enough has been said concerning the first, and if the theist reasons on their notions of divine goodness it is merely *ex abundantia*. But he will expose the second, by observing that if goodness ought to be, as they assume, the sole directing principle in this case, and if wisdom ought to contrive and power to execute under this direction, the happiness of man ought to be proportionable to the goodness of God, that is infinite; than which no greater absurdity can be conceived. But if we assume, in opposition to these confederates, that divine wisdom, whereof we have ideas much better determined than we have of divine goodness, ought to be deemed in this as in every other case the directing principle of divine conduct, it will follow without any absurdity, nay most agreeably to the reason of things, that the effect may be proportionable to the cause that is infinite. It implies contradiction to say that God should have made a creature infinitely happy, as happy as himself. But it implies none to say that he made a system of creation infinitely wise and the best of all possible systems.

AFTER

AFTER this, our thief would be apt to make many just reproaches to the two confederates. He would reproach the atheist with his spirit of cavil and the unfairness of his proceedings. You pretend, would he say, that you cannot believe a God, because you cannot reconcile many appearances, nor the state of mankind in general, to your notions of goodness. But on your principles you would not acknowledge him, if the proofs of his goodness were as clear, as uniform and as numerous as those of his wisdom; for even to these you do not yield. These however are conformable to the notions of wisdom you must have, if you have any at all. You may cavil about the proofs of his goodness, and produce instances that seem repugnant to it, and that would be so if your hypothesis was true. But the proofs of his wisdom have nothing equivocal nor problematical in them upon any hypothesis. You can produce no instances that even seem to be repugnant to it. Whilst natural philosophy was ill cultivated, and ill understood indeed, men founded their objections to the wisdom of God in their ignorance. But since the noble science has been improved by experiment and geometry, since greater discoveries of the causes and effects of the phaenomena in the oeconomy of the world have been made, every new discovery has been a new proof of the wisdom of God, and it has shined conspicuous in the very instances brought against it.

It is a vain undertaking to go about to convince men of the goodness of God, who are obstinate enough to resist such evident demonstrations of his wisdom, or not to see that an all-perfect Being must always be determined by the harmonious concurrence of all his perfections; and not in one instance by his goodness, in another by his justice, and so on. When we
say,

say, that he is infinitely wise, we mean that he does on every occasion that which is fittest to be done, and it would imply contradiction to assert this, and to deny the other. But however the thief might go one step further in reproaches to the atheist. With what face, might he say to him, can you object to the goodness of God, that men are exposed to general evils, to tempests, to earthquakes, to famine, to pestilence, as well as to particular evils, to pain, to sickness and to violent death? Is God not good, because they are exposed to evils that result necessarily from the constitution of a world, which, if we should allow it to have been made for man, was made for the universe too, and to all of which evils they expose themselves voluntarily for no other reason than to indulge the ruling passion of their minds, and to sate their ambition or their avarice for instance, if these were to be sated? God has given us means, as I said above, to avoid, or to palliate, or to cure these evils in many cases. But men court them. The evils, that may be said to come from God, are, for the most part, soon over. The greatest of these calamities are seldom renewed; and few men have been, I suppose, exposed to the plague twice, or involved twice in the ruins of an earthquake. But ambition, avarice, and other ruling passions, are never sated: and the same persons expose themselves anew and continually to all the evils that accompany the pursuit of them. The thief might conclude this head very properly, by saying to the atheist, these evils, which you sound so highly and with so ill a grace, for the reasons that have been given, must be contingent effects of the constitution of the world, or they must be caused by particular directions. Take your choice. If you say the first, you say nothing that is inconsistent with the goodness of a Creator and Governor, whilst you confirm my hypothesis, that this world was made for the universe, not for man.

man. If you say the last, you contradict yourself: you own that there is a God, and you acknowledge his providence.

THE same theist might press his two adversaries, the atheist and the divine both, in this manner still further. If you say, that God has not created the best of all possible systems in creating the universe, you deny that infinite wisdom which you, the divine, assert, and the proofs of which you as well as I have challenged the atheist to controvert. If you say, that he has, you must either cease your complaints, or you must continue to complain on one of these two principles, that the Creator ought to have established a system that was not the best relatively to the whole of his design, that is to the universe, but the best relatively to man; or else that he ought to have created no such being as man. Thus you are driven from absurdity to absurdity; for thus you do something more absurd, if possible, than a direct denial of the wisdom of God would be. One of you admits, and the other cannot controvert this wisdom: and then you both assert, that he should not have acted conformably to it. His goodness should have controuled his wisdom. He should have changed the order of the universe, or he should have broket he chain of intellectual beings. Such an assumed conduct may be conformable to your ideas of goodness. But the ideas of God, if we may ascribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are not those of man: and besides such a conduct as this, even in human affairs, can answer no ideas but those of weakness, frailty, prepossession and partiality. These, therefore, you would ascribe to the all-perfect Being. Such is your impiety. One of you, that he may have a pretence to doubt of God's existence. The other, that he may have a pretence to be dogmatical about the designs of God, and the future dispensations of his providence.

XLV.