



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

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

In Five Volumes, complete.

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

London, 1754

LIV.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-60777](#)

racked on the wheel, and that he does not punish to exterminate. Let us descend to particular instances that are urged against the justice of God, in order to prove it, and to confirm what has been said concerning good, and bad, happy, and unhappy, men.

LIV.

TULLY lies still open before me, and there I find many instances of this sort produced by COTTA with as much confidence as if they were decisive. Why did the two SCIPIOS fall in Spain, and MARCELLUS and PAULUS in Italy, making war against the Carthaginians? Why did MAXIMUS bury his son who was of consular dignity? Why was the Aemilian SCIPIO not safe in his own house? Why was RUTILIUS banished, DRUSUS assassinated, SCAEVOLA slain at the altar of VESTA, and CATULUS obliged to procure his own death? Why did MARIUS die in his bed, after a seventh consulship? Why were he, and CINNA, DIONYSIUS the elder, PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, APOLLODORUS, and even the assassin VARIUS, and the highway man HARPALUS, suffered so long to exercise, with impunity, their cruelties? The day would be too short, indeed, to enumerate instances of any kind in this declamatory, loose, and inconclusive manner*. It is not unlike the proceeding of certain great scholars, who crowd their text and their margin with a multitude of names, which stand as vouchers of the facts or opinions they advance, and impose often on the unwary who will not, and the ignorant who cannot, examine for themselves; whilst they, who will and can

* Dies deficiat si velim numerare quibus bonis malé evenerit; nec minus, si commemorem quibus improbis optime.

examine,

examine, discover these pretended vouchers to be sometimes of no authority, sometimes of neither and sometimes of the contrary side. I could point out signal examples of this sort in the writings of admired authors: and we might have seen some such, perhaps, on this occasion, if CICERO had made BALBUS reply to COTTA, as he makes him lay in a claim to do, with no small confidence.

I regret the want of this reply much more on account of facts, than arguments; for the Stoics were great logicians, and pitiful reasoners. Their whole philosophy was little more than a perpetual play with words: and, on this occasion for instance, to have replied in character, BALBUS must have insisted that pain is not an evil, as POSIDONIUS did, when he roared out in a fit of the gout*. He might have owned it to be something rough, abhorrent to nature, difficult to be borne, melancholy and hard. He might have applied the definition of evil to the sensation of pain, but must not have called it by that name, because the portic had decreed that there is no evil but in vice, nor any good but in virtue. No matter. He would have set very probably the facts, which COTTA quoted, in a different light, and would have shewn by a fuller and more accurate state of them, that they were insufficient to his purpose. It is very probable, he would have done this, since we have good reason, even at this time, to doubt the exact truth of some of these anecdotes, and to suspect both prejudice, and partiality, in the characters.

* Concludunt ratiunculis stoici cur non sit malum; quasi de verbo, non de re, laboretur. - - - Asperum est, contra naturam, difficile perpetuum, triste, durum. Haec copia verborum est; quod omnes uno verbo malum appellamus, id tot modis posse dicere. Definis tu mihi, non tollis dolorem. Tusc. Disp. L. 2.

I know

I know not, whether BALBUS would have called in question the story of REGULUS*. It was probably fabulous, in many circumstances at least, and there were those among the Romans who thought it to be so. But it served to blacken the Carthaginians, to whom they bore an immortal hatred, and popular prejudice kept it in credit at Rome: as we see that many false traditions about the Saracens and Turks have been kept up for several ages, and are so still, notwithstanding the detection of them, in christian nations. Their poets, and their orators, sanctified the tale for the honor of the Roman name, as the most illustrious instance of magnanimity, fortitude, and a religious attachment to engagements taken even with an enemy, that was ever given. BALBUS then might have rejected the story; or, taking it for true, he might have insisted, that it furnished an example of human virtue, but none of divine injustice. He might have made REGULUS a voluntary martyr, as SENECA makes the philosopher DIOGENES a confessor of natural religion.

ONE of these stoicians might have anticipated the answers which the other of them gave to such examples, as that of RUTILIUS, who was banished, or that of MAXIMUS, who lost a son arrived to consular honors. He would have said of such men as these, that they were unfortunate, but not unhappy, that they were moved, but not overcome*. He might have pushed his argument against COTTA further, on the principles of the portic. He might have maintained, that the misfortunes of some good men are designed as lessons to all by providence, in whose dispensations more regard is had to man-

* Vid. AV. GELLUM.

† - - Sentit illa, sed vincit. SEN. de Provid.

kind,

kind, than to particular men †. In general, we place happiness and unhappiness very blindly, and very falsely. Providence endeavors to open our eyes, when things, that we esteem evils, happen to the good. But we pervert the argument. Instead of concluding, that such things are not real evils, we hearken to the prejudices of imagination; we believe, and, by believing, we make them such, and then we accuse this very providence of injustice. Even the privation of an imaginary good is esteemed a positive evil, the want of riches for instance. The man of Ross was envied by none. CHARTRES and WALTERS, whom you have rendered immortal, were envied by many. This folly prevails so far, that men have imagined the Supreme Being best pleased, when his temples have glittered with gold and silver. If you was of this opinion as most of your communion are, and thought God more honored on this account at St. PETER's, than at St. PAUL's, I would quote to you these verses :

- - - - Jupiter Ammon

Pauper adhuc Deus est, nullis violata per aevum
Divitiis delubra tenens, morumque priorum
Numen Romano templum defendit ab auro*.

THE examples of those good citizens of Rome, who came to untimely ends, would not have embarrassed our stoician. He would have asked his antagonist, what pretence could be found to accuse providence of injustice, because men who waged war were sometimes killed, or because men who mingled in civil contests were exposed to the mutual resentments of exasperated parties? He would have asked, who could determine when it was best for him to die? Prolonga-

+ + + + Pro universis, quorum major diis cura est, quam singulorum. Ib.

* LACT. L. 9.

I

tion

tion of days delivers men over, very often, to misery they would have escaped if they had died sooner, and changes the whole color of their lives: so that the good or evil that remains in store for us, at any age, being uncertain, we can neither pronounce a man unhappy because he dies, nor happy before he dies. **SOLON*** taught this apothegm to **CROESUS**, who lived to see it verified in his own case, and to reverence that wisdom, when he was the captive of **CYRUS**, to which he had paid little regard, while he sat on the throne of **LYDIA**. Rome, who made all the nations from the Euphrates to the western ocean tremble, trembled herself, when **POMPEY** fell sick at Naples. **POMPEY** recovered. “*Multae urbes et publicae ca vota vicerunt.*” But he recovered only to wage the civil war with his father-in-law, to take arms without being prepared to take them, to abandon Italy, to be beaten in Greece, and to be murdered, by servile hands, in Aegypt†. Such a subject as **POMPEY**, of such a common-wealth as the Roman, may be paired with the greatest princes. Let me mention, therefore, the late king of France, on this occasion and to the same purpose. He had passed more than forty years in the greatest prosperity, when **CHARLES** the second of Spain died. Had he died at the same time, when that rich succession came into his family, his death would have been thought the more deplorable on this very account. He lived; he outlived his glory, his power, and if I may say so, almost his posterity. It might have been said of him: “*- - renovata semper clade domus, multis in luctibus, inque perpetuo moerore, et nigrâ veste senescit.*”

* - - - - Dicique beatum

Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

† - - - - Non enim cum Socero bellum gessisset, non imparatus arma fumpisset, etc. Tusc. Disp. L. 2.

BALBUS

BALBUS would have shewn that the examples brought of prosperous iniquity were neither more just, nor more applicable, than those of the misery of good men. If he had allowed that MARIUS had the happiness, such an one as it is, of dying in his bed like his rival SYLLA, who took the appellation of happy very ostentatiously and very unjustly, yet he would not have allowed this other man of blood the same appellation. Notwithstanding his elevation from the plough, which he followed for hire, to the highest dignities of the common-wealth*, notwithstanding his victories and triumphs, it would be difficult to find in the Roman or any other history a man whose crimes were more constantly punished, or whose life was a series of more misery. Besides his bodily infirmities, besides the

Exilium, et carcer, minturnarumque paludes,
Et mendicatus victâ Carthagine panis,

he was tossed in all the storms he raised. His blood was every moment ready to flow, and the victorious sword of SYLLA hung over his head. The various scenes of misery, through which he made others go, were revenged by those through which he went himself. There is a lively description of both in the second book of the Pharsalia †: and if we read his life, we shall incline to think that prosperity was measured out to him for the punishment of others, and misery, in proportion, for his own, the executioner and the victim, alternately, of divine justice.

* Solebat
Poscere mercedes alieno laffus aratro. Juv.

† - - - - Omnia passo,
Quae pejor fortuna potest, atque omnibus uso
Quae melior.

VOL. V.

G g g

Non

Non ille favorc

Numinis ingenti superum protectus ab irâ,
Vir ferus, et Romam cupienti perdere fato
Sufficiens.

If he lived to a greater age than his brother and his son, it was in order to make him more miserable, as he had been more criminal, than they. But even they resembled him in misery, as they had resembled him in cruelty. His brother was put to a painful death at the tomb of **CATULUS**, and his son fell on his sword in despair. Let me make another observation. **MARIUS** laid the foundations of his fortune on his ingratitude and treachery to **METELLUS**, whose lieutenant-general he had been in the jugurthine war. **SYLLA** had been quaestor to **MARIUS** in the same war. **SYLLA** ruined his party, defeated his designs, and scattered his ashes in the river †. Surely **COTTA**, when he accused the justice of God for giving prosperity to wicked men, could not have produced a more glaring proof of the contrary.

HE was not more lucky in other examples of the same sort. Our stoic peace would have opposed to him, for instance, the different accounts of authors concerning the elder **DIONYSIUS**, some of whom related how this tyrant had been tormented by the furies, and had perished by the treachery of his own family, whilst all of them concurred in representing his whole life to have been a state of misery. What, indeed, could be more miserable than the perpetual terror and universal distrust, wherein he passed his days? **PLUTARCH** relates, and **BALBUS** might know long before **PLUTARCH** wrote, that this wretched man dared not trust any barber to shave him; that no one,

[†] Erutos cineres in Anienis alveum sparsit. VAL. MAX. L. 9. C. 2.

not

not his brother, not his son was suffered to come into his apartment, till he had been stripped and searched, and had changed his cloaths, and that the tyrant owned himself afraid even of the best of his friends: so that if he reigned eight and thirty years, as COTTA says, he was eight and thirty years miserable. A noble instance truly of the prosperity of the wicked!

OUR stoician would have shewn, perhaps, that the example of PISISTRATUS was not pertinent. He used violence to gain, and, more than once, to regain, the supreme power at Athens, as GELO and HIERO did in Sicily, as others used it against him, and as it must always happen when parties contend for power. But when he had got this power, he used it well, like those Sicilian princes: and tho he was called a tyrant, in the bad sense of the word, by the party opposed to him, yet he shewed the licentious Greeks how much a limited monarchy, for he limited his by the laws and advice of SOLON, was preferable to one of their turbulent and tyrannical democracies. PHALARIS was a monster in cruelty; but the people of Agrigentum roasted him in his own bull, after he had roasted the maker of it: and the Orchomenians took a severe vengeance on APOLLODORUS. The same would have been observed to have happened to other tyrants among the Greeks, to CINNA among the Romans, and to other inferior villains such as VARIUS, who stabbed DRUSUS and poisoned METELLUS, such as HARPALUS, whose long success in robbery bore testimony against the gods, as DIOGENES the Cynic who barked against them, and whom COTTA condescends to quote, presumed to say.

BUT the Pontiff would not have been silenced by these answers, He had a reply ready. " Prohiberi melius fuit im-

G g g 2

" pedil

"pedirique." It had been better in the gods to hinder these men from doing so much mischief, than to leave them to vengeance afterwards. Now I think that BALBUS would have treated this reply as a mere evasion, grounded on a false supposition, and, even with that help, insufficient. The men spoken of, would he have said, are far from enjoying inward happiness, whatever outward prosperity may attend the course of their wicked lives. They live in danger, in fear, and in perpetual anguish of mind. Their punishment, therefore, is not deferred: and if they are suffered long to punish others, they are ministers and proofs at the same time of that divine justice which I defend. Their prosperity serves to this very purpose. A DIONYSIUS, or a CINNA, or any other inhuman tyrant is to be looked upon like one of those monsters which the poets feigned. Like a minotaure fed with human flesh, or such a boar as executed DIANA's vengeance in Aetolia. Bolts of destroying thunder go out of their mouths*. Their very breath scatters desolation around. When the monster has inflicted the punishment he was sent to inflict, when the measure of his iniquity, and of God's justice, is filled, a THESEUS or a MELEAGER is raised up, and he perishes.

THIS is the general course of things which infinite wisdom has constituted, and the examples of the few who suffer necessarily, tho occasionally according to it, are sufficient to give a warning to all men that they are inexcusable if they do not take. COTTA, who exercises greater injustice towards God than any of the tyrants he quotes did towards men, is much scandalized that those two eyes of the mediterranean

* Ultorem spreta per agros misit aprum.
Fulmen ab ore venit, frondes afflatibus ardent. OVID. Metam. L. 8.

coast, Corinth and Carthage, were put out. CRITOLAUS violated the respect that was due to the Roman legates. ASDRUBAL used much cruelty to the Roman captives. These were the immediate causes of the ruin of those two republics, and MEMMIUS and SCIPIO were the instruments of pride, of ambition, and of insatiable resentment. God could have prevented these destructions no doubt “subvenire certe potuit et con-“ servare urbes tantas atque tales”. But how did the Pontiff know that MEMMIUS and SCIPIO were not instruments of the justice of providence, as well as of Roman policy and passion? The worst men, and the romans were none of the best, are employed to punish the worst. None so fit for the task. They are the instruments, and in their turns the examples of divine justice. The wealth, the splendor, the magnificence of Corinth were great; but Corinth was a sink of iniquity. Carthage was a great and powerful state; but the Carthaginians were a faithless, factious, and cruel people. Might not these be the remote and true causes, whatever the immediate and apparent were, of their destruction? Was God obliged to save them by an extraordinary interposition against the ordinary course of his providence, because their neighbours admired or feared them? The Romans had no advantage in real virtue over the Carthaginians, tho they had it greatly in policy, order, discipline, and a certain enthusiastic zeal for the grandeur of their empire, and the glory of the Roman name. If we had PHILISTUS or any of the Carthaginian historians in our hands, we should see very evidently what we may collect from those of Rome, that romana fides was or deserved to be a proverbial term of reproach in Afric as much as punica fides in Italy. Let us take then occasion to adore the wisdom and justice of divine providence from an example brought in opposition to the latter. The romans destroyed Carthage and, by her destruction, prepared the way to their own. At
the

the very time when COTTA lamented that of Corinth and Carthage, that of Rome was coming on; for the loss of her liberty was connected with that of her empire by a scarce interrupted succession of tyrants. Under these she lay, as it were on the rack, and died a lingering and painful death.

LV.

IN asserting the justice of providence, I chuse rather to insist on the constant, visible, and undeniable course of a general providence which is sufficient for the purpose, than to assume a dispensation of particular providences. The atheist, who assumes that there ought to be such, complains that they are wanting. The theist, who admits that there are such, complains that they are insufficient. The former draws from what he assumes a pretence to cavil. The latter only grows inconsistent; for I would ask him if there are any such providences, why not more? He admits enough to break through and overturn the natural order and constitution of the physical and moral system. How comes it to pass that there are not enough to stop his mouth when he complains of the misery of man and the injustice of providence? The truth is that we have not in philosophical speculation, in any history except that of the Bible, nor in our own experience, sufficient grounds to establish the doctrine of particular providences, and to reconcile it to that of a general providence, which continues, and directs the course of things in the material and intellectual systems, as these systems were originally constituted by the author of nature. They who have attempted to do this by shewing with great, and, as I think, with too much subtlety of wit and licence of imagination, in what cases, how far, and in what manner, God may act by particu-