

Basic Detail Report



Elysium and Tartarus or the State of Final Retribution [7 of 17 Prints]

Date

1791

Primary Maker

James Barry

Medium

Engraving on paper

Dimensions

Image Size: 41.7 x 92.5 cm

Description

Seventh print of seventeen in 'A series of etchings by James Barry Esq. From his Original and Justly Celebrated Paintings in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.' Although the prints have been bound with the title 'A Series of Etchings ...' They are in fact engravings (intaglio prints). A detailed and in-depth description is transcribed below. This description is taken from the bound version of Barry's etchings and printed on the page following the actual print. 'Elysium, or the State of Final Retribution. In this sublime Picture, the Artist has, with wonderful sagacity, and without any of those anachronisms, which tarnish the lustre of other very celebrated performances, brought together those great and good men of all ages and nations, who have acted as the cultivators and benefactors of mankind. This Picture is separated from that of the Society distributing its rewards, by palm-trees; near which, on a pedestal, sits a pelican, feeding its young with its own blood; a happy type of those personages represented in the Picture, who had worn themselves out in the service of mankind. Behind the palms, near the top of the Picture, are indistinctly seen, as immersed and lost in the great blaze of light, cherubims veiled with their wings, in the act of adoration, and offering incense to that invisible and incomprehensible Power which is above them, and out of the Picture, from whence the light and glory proceed which are diffused over the whole piece. By thus introducing the idea of the Divine Essence, by effect, rather than by form, the absurdity committed by many painters is happily avoided, and the mind of every intelligent spectator is filled with awe and reverence. The groups of female figures, which appear at a further distance absorbed in glory, are those characters of female excellence, whose social conduct, benevolence, affectionate friendship, and regular discharge of domestic duties, once softened the cares of human life, and diffused happiness around them. In the more advanced part, just bordering on this blaze of light (where the female figures are almost absorbed) is introduced a group of poor native West-Indian females, in the act of adoration, preceded by angels burning incense, and followed by their good bishop; his face partly concealed by that energetic hand which holds his crozier or pastoral staff, may (notwithstanding) by the word Chiapa inscribed on the front of his mitre, be identified with the glorious

Friar Bartolomeo de las Casas, bishop of that place. This matter of friendly intercourse, continued beyond life, is pushed still further, in the more advanced part of the same group, by the male adoring Americans, and some Dominican friars, where the very graceful incident occurs of one of these Dominicans, directing the attention of an astonished Caribb to some circumstances of that beatitude, the enjoyment of which he had promised to his Caribb friend. The first group below on your left hand, in this Picture, consists of Roger Bacon, Archimedes, Descartes, and Thales; behind them stand Sir Francis Bacon, Copernicus, Gallileo, and Sir Isaac Newton, regarding with awe and admiration a solar system, which two angels are unveiling and explaining to them: near the inferior angel who is holding the veil, is Columbus, with a chart of his voyage; and close to him, Epaminondas with his shield, Socrates, Cato the younger, the elder Brutus, and Sir Thomas More; a sextumvirate, to which, Swift says, all ages have not been able to add a seventh. Behind Marcus Brutus is William Molyneux, holding his book of the Case of Ireland; near Columbus is Lord Shaftesbury, John Locke, Zeno, Aristotle, and Plato; and in the opening, between this group and the next, are Dr. William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, and the Hon. Robert Boyle. The next group are legislators, where King Alfred the Great is leaning on the shoulder of William Penn, who is shewing his tolerant pacific code of equal laws to Lycurgus; standing around them are Minos, Trajan, Antoninus, Peter the Great of Russia, Edward the Black Prince, Henry the Fourth of France, Andrea Doria of Genoa. Here too are introduced those patrons of genius, Lorenzo de Medicis, Louis the Fourteenth, Alexander the Great, Charles the First, the Earl of Arundel, and the illustrious monk Cassiodorus, no less admirable and exemplary as the secretary of state, than as the friar in his convent at Viviers, the plan of which he holds in his hand. Just before this group, on the rocks which separate Elysium from the infernal regions, are placed the angelic guards (see Milton, Book IV. verse 549); and in the most advanced part an arch-angel, weighing attentively the virtues and vices of mankind, whose raised hand and expressive countenance denote great concern at the preponderancy of evil: behind this figure is another angel, explaining to Pascal and Bishop Butler, the analogy between nature and revealed religion. The figure behind Pascal and Butler, with his arms stretched out, and advancing with so much energy, is that ornament of our later ages, the graceful, the sublime Bossuet Bishop of Meaux; the uniting tendency of the paper he holds in his hand, resting on the shoulder of Origen, would well comport with those pacific views of the amiable Grotius, for healing those discordant evils which are sapping the foundation of Christianity amongst the nations of Europe, where, in other respects, it would be, and even is, so happily and so well established. (See page 61 of Mr. Barry's printed letter to Society of Arts, &c. dated Feb. 1793). Behind Francis the First and Lord Arundel are Hugo Grotius, Father Paul, and Pope Adrian. Towards the top of the Picture, and near the centre, sits Homer; on his right hand, Milton; next him, Shakspeare, Spenser, Chaucer, and Sappho. Behind Sappho sits Alcæus, who is talking with Ossian; near him are Menander, Moliere, Congreve, Bruma, Confucius, Mango Capac, &c. Next Homer, on the other side, is the Archbishop of Cambray, with Virgil leaning on his shoulder; and near them, Tasso, Ariosto, and Dante. Behind Dante, Petrarch, Laura, Giovanni, Boccaccio. In the second range of figures, over Edward the Black Prince and Peter the Great, are Swift, Erasmus, and Cervantes; near them Pope, Dryden, Addison, Richardson, and Hogarth. Behind Dryden and Pope, are Sterne, Gay, Goldsmith, Tompson, and Fielding; near Richardson, Inigo Jones, Sir Christopher Wren, and Vandyke. Next Vandyke is Rubens, with hand on the shoulder of Le Sueur; and behind him is Le Brun; next to these are Julio Romano, Dominichino, and Annibal Caracci, who are in conversation with Phidias, behind whom is Giles Hussey. Nicholas Poussin and the Sycionian Maid

are near them with Callimachus and Pamphilus: near Apelles is Corregio; behind Raphael stand Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci; and behind them, Ghiberti, Donatello, Massaccio, Brunaleschi, Albert Durer, Giotto, and Cimabue. In the top of this part of the Picture, the Painter has happily glanced at what is called, by astronomers, the System of Systems, where is fixed stars, considered as so many suns, each with his several planets, are revolving round the Great Cause of all things; and representing every thing as effected by intelligence, he has shewn each system carried along in its revolution by an angel. Though only a small portion of this circle can be seen, yet enough is shewn to manifest the sublimity of the idea. In the other corner of the Picture, the Painter has represented Tartarus, where, among cataracts of fire and clouds of smoke, two large hands are seen, one of them holding a fire-fork, the other pulling down a number of figures, bound together by serpents, representing War, Gluttony, Extravagance, Detraction, Parsimony, and Ambition; and floating down the fiery gulph, are Tyranny, Hypocrisy, and Cruelty, with their proper attributes: the whole of this most excellent Picture proving, in the most forcible manner, the truth of that great maxim, which has been already quoted, but cannot be too often inculcated. That the attainment of Man's true rank in the creation, and his present and future happiness, individual as well as public, depend on the cultivation and proper direction of the human faculties.' Below the image is an inscription. For the full inscription, see the Inscription field.