

**BARCLAY VINDICATED: A  
REVIEW OF ROBERT  
CHARLETON'S "THOUGHTS  
ON BARCLAY'S APOLOGY"**

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Barclay Vindicated: A Review of Robert Charleton's "Thoughts on Barclay's Apology" by  
William L. Bellows

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**WILLIAM L. BELLOWS**

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A REVIEW

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ROBERT CHARLETON'S "THOUGHTS

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BARCLAY'S APOLOGY."

BY

WILLIAM L. BELLOWS.

"The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!"—ISA. II. 11.

MANCHESTER:

WILLIAM IRWIN, 24, DEANSGATE.

1868.

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## BARCLAY VINDICATED.

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*To the lovers of True, Christian Divinity.*

FRIENDS,

Were I not persuaded that this heartfelt Divinity has been, is, and will be promoted by the perusal of Barclay's Apology, I would not pen these lines. About forty years ago I met with that work—it was then made helpful to me; removing perplexity on a point in dispute between the Calvinists and the Arminians. The more I become acquainted with the book, the more I value it.

In the 11th page of his pamphlet, R. Charleton says, "I will not dwell on his [Barclay's] failure adequately to recognize its place [the place of the Bible,] as the divinely appointed means by which we receive our knowledge of God and his truth." Had R. C. said, "A divinely appointed means," or, "THIS means frequently made use of,"—his views of the Bible's place would have been correct. As the sentence stands, the word THIS so limits it, as to involve an error. Great indeed does the mistake appear of limiting the saving power of the Most High to the letter of Scripture as its instrument. It is at variance with facts. Here is one from the *British Workman* for this month,\*—to this effect. *Charney*, a prisoner, walking in the courtyard of the prison, observed a plant pushing up from between the stones. He was cut off from the resources of reading and writing, so was glad to have some little thing to watch over and be interested about. He noticed it day after day; its beauties unfolded: it was a lovely flower—Charney had entered the prison an

\* 5th Month, 1888.

infidel, and among his scribblings on the walls had written "all things come by chance." But this flower rebuked his infidelity: in it he saw the eternal power and Godhead. He became a changed man.

Take another instance from "the Arminian Magazine for 1794." I quote verbatim.†

"When Mr. TUCKER had preached about two years, he was uncommonly harassed with temptations to Atheism. These continued, a few intervals excepted, many months. His distress sometimes upon this account was so great as to embarrass his mind beyond description. At length, however, he was happily delivered by the following occurrence. Passing through a wood, with a design to preach in a neighbouring village, while he was swinging his hand a leaf accidentally stuck between his fingers. He instantly felt a powerful impression on his mind to examine the texture of the leaf. Holding it between his eye and the sun, and reflecting upon its exquisitely curious and wonderful formation, he was led into an extensive contemplation of the works of creation. Tracing these back to their first cause, he had, in a moment, such a conviction of the existence of the ineffable perfections of God, which then appeared in every spire of grass, that his distress was immediately removed, and he prosecuted his journey, rejoicing in God, and admiring him in every object that presented itself to his view."

Here was a man comforted, not by a text of Scripture, but through the instrumentality of a leaf. Let none however mistake the object for which things of this sort are quoted. It is not to depreciate the Scriptures, but to show that Barclay did well in *not* limiting Divine Wisdom to *their* instrumentality.

The next extract, showing how a good man was helped out of desponding fears, is of so serious a cast, that we

† Page 312.



may well say, though no text is quoted therein, this is holy ground:—

WILLIAM TENNENT was confirmed in religious experience by means of a *trance*, which left such an impression on him that it may be best given in his own words, which are, “Such was the effect on my mind of what I had seen and heard, that if it be possible for a human being to live entirely above the world and the things of it, for some time afterwards, I was that person. The ravishing sounds of the songs and hallelujahs that I heard, and the very words that were uttered, were not out of my ears, when awake, for at least three years. All the kingdoms of the earth were in my sight as nothing and vanity; and so great were my ideas of heavenly glory, that nothing which did not in some measure relate to it, could command my serious attention.”

There is an anecdote respecting this same good man (William Tennent) which may be quoted as another proof that Divine Power, in the conversion of a sinner, is not to be limited to Scripture as its instrument. The account is headed, *THE DUMB SERMON*. It states that W. T. “once took much pains to prepare a sermon, to convince a celebrated infidel of the truth of Christianity; but in attempting to deliver this laboured discourse, he was so confused, as to be compelled to stop, and close the service by prayer. This unexpected failure, in one who had so often astonished the unbeliever by the force of his eloquence, led the infidel to reflect that Mr. T. had been, at other times, aided by a divine power. This reflection proved the means of his conversion. Thus God accomplished by silence, what his servant wished to effect by persuasive preaching.”\*

I remain, your Friend,

W. L. B.

\* *British Workman*, 6th Month, 1864.

## LETTER II.

FRIENDS,

One good man, speaking of the Bible says, "The whole explains every part." It is fair to take the general drift and spirit of a book rather than an isolated passage.

Judging in this way, and comparing Barclay with himself, I cannot see that want of charity in his Apology, which R. C. thinks there is.

R. C. says, (p.p. 12, 13.) "In the Proposition on Worship, after defining what constitutes true and acceptable worship, R. Barclay adds, 'All other worship then, both praises, prayers, or preachings, which man sets about in his own will \* \* \* whether they be a prescribed form, as a liturgy, &c., or prayers conceived extempore by the natural strength and faculty of the mind, they are all but superstition, will-worship, and abominable idolatry in the sight of God.'

"Now, if these words have any practical meaning at all, they must mean, among other things, that every clergyman who uses the Liturgy in his public ministrations,—though he were a Charles Simeon, a Leigh Richmond, or an Edward Bickersteth,—is guilty each time he does so, not only of superstition and will-worship, 'but of *abominable idolatry in the sight of God.*'"

Let us compare this with Barclay's own words in this same proposition on Worship, namely, in Section V. "The Popish Mass and Vespers I do believe to be, as to the matter of them, *abominable idolatry and superstition*, and so also believe the Protestants; yet will neither they nor I affirm that in the darkness of Popery no upright-hearted men, though zealous in these abominations, have been heard of God, or accepted of him: Who can deny but that both *Bernard and Bonaventure, Taulerus, Thomas a Kempis*, and divers others have both known and tasted

of the love of God, and felt the power and virtue of God's Spirit working with them for their salvation? And yet ought we not to forsake and deny those superstitions which they were found in? The Calvinistical Presbyterians do much upbraid (and I say not without reason) the formality and deadness of the Episcopalian and Lutheran Liturgies; and yet, they will not deny but there have been some good men among them, &c."

R. C. thinks that Barclay's words imply,—that EVERY clergyman, EACH time he uses the Liturgy is guilty of abominable idolatry.

This looks plausible according to R. C.'s quotation: but that quotation breaks off *where it ought not*. Carry it on, and we find Barclay saying that it pleased God "to blow upon the dead and dry bones, and to raise some breathings of his own and answer them." Therefore, as Barclay states that there were some divine breathings among the dry bones of forms, R. C.'s words fall to the ground.

If the reader will do Barclay the justice to read his Proposition on Worship throughout he may see how clearly R. B. defends himself and his friends from any charge of uncharitableness.

Barclay's argument amounts to this; that ALL prayers, whether liturgical or otherwise, which are without the Spirit of God, are idolatry. And truly an *image* is *form without power*. Or we may compare a beautiful form of prayer, *without the animating Spirit*, to the dead body of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Beautiful as she was once, *when the animating spirit was in her*, yet, after that was departed, even the father of the faithful was constrained to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." The Spirit of God is not at man's command.—Therefore, if the most excellent form of words be uttered in man's will only, what is it better than image worship *at such times*?

The above will, I hope, be judged sufficient to exculpate