

**WITHOUT FAITH, WITHOUT GOD; OR, AN
APPEAL TO GOD CONCERNING HIS OWN
EXISTENCE. BEING AN ESSAY, PROVING,
FROM THE SCRIPTURES, THAT THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD COMES NOT BY
NATURE, INNATE IDEAS, INTUITION, REASON,
ETC. ETC. BUT ONLY BY REVELATION**

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WITH A PREFACE,

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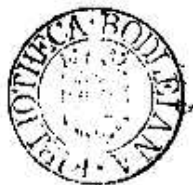
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MDCCLXXXVI.

—The world by wisdom knew not God.—The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.—By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.



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Liverpool.

PREFACE.

The object of the following work is to shew that, for our knowledge of all that concerns God, we are indebted solely and exclusively to divine revelation; and that every particular which God hath seen meet to reveal to us, stands equally and infallibly true to our consciences. What God hath condescended to become the witness to the truth of in our minds, can no more be confirmed, than it can be weakened, by any other species of evidence.

In aiming at the establishment of these principles, the scope of the author of *Without Faith, Without God*, differs essentially from that of ordinary writers on the subject of religion. According to them, there are religious notions which owe their origin to man himself; and even views which are derived from revelation, may nevertheless receive increase and confirmation from other quarters. Indeed, if those who have commonly undertaken to treat of this all-important topic are to be believed, nothing is better calculated to produce a liking to the doctrines of Christ Jesus, than demonstra-

tions *à priori* that they must be, and *à posteriori* that they are, agreeable to the results of observation and rational enquiry. Hence, statements and views, contained in the Bible, which appear to them to be borne out by matter of fact, they profess to be themselves thoroughly convinced of, and shew themselves solicitous to bring under the notice of their followers. But in regard to points which have no other basis than divine testimony, they either preserve a total silence, or at the utmost speak doubtfully and hesitatingly. This, whenever divine testimony enters the conscience as such, Mr. Barclay shews cannot happen.

All that God hath declared, resting on one and the same authority, can only be believed by us in one and the same way. God being the only, and being also the infallible, witness to the truth of whatever He hath made known in His word, every part of it must be to us, if enlightened by Him, equally and absolutely certain. We cannot be sure of one divine truth, while we reject, or are hesitating about, another. We cannot be receiving the facts of scripture, while we are dubious as to its reasonings. While we admit as true the transmission of sin and death to us from Adam, we cannot be rejecting, or in doubt about, our possession of righteousness and life everlasting in Christ Jesus. So far from this, the Holy Spirit testifying in our consciences equally and infallibly to the truth of all that is contained in the sacred record, whatever, through the medium of that record, is by him disclosed to us, is to us equally and infallibly certain.

This, indeed, must be. The Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of one of the apostles, has furnished us

with an argument, in support of Mr. Barclay's leading principle, to subvert which sets all the boasted ingenuity of man completely at defiance. *If we receive the witness or testimony of man, the witness or testimony of God is greater.* 1 John v. 9. That is, if mere human testimony, confessedly inferior to that of God as in every point of view it must be, is nevertheless frequently productive in our minds of a conviction which we shall in vain attempt to distinguish from *absolute certainty*, can divine testimony, when introduced into our minds as such, produce a conviction the strength of which shall be *less*? Nay, if in many cases we find it impossible to distinguish the effect of human testimony from *absolute certainty*, must not divine testimony, as superior by its nature, beget *absolute and infallible certainty itself*?—Although I have never visited Mexico, I have no doubts concerning the existence of that country. And yet, what higher testimony than that of man constitutes the basis of my conviction in this particular case? When my heavenly Father, the faithful and true witness, sees meet to reveal it to me and my fellow believers, as the import and substance of his testimony, *that he hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son*, 1 John v. 11, is it possible that there should exist in our minds, believing this to be his testimony, a conviction of its truth *inferior* to that with which we believe in the existence of Mexico?

The fact is, the following work of Mr. Barclay is a bold, masterly, and scriptural, assault on the principle of *religious scepticism*.

Ordinary religion can boast of no higher source than education, custom, secular interest, human observations and reasonings, or at most a desire to satisfy the cravings of the natural conscience. In many cases, several, or perhaps all, of these causes may concur to its production. Man and the exercise of mere human faculties thus giving birth to it, a *probability* that they may be right, mingled with *much uncertainty*, is the highest point which those possessed of it can reach. For such persons to be *absolutely certain* of the correctness of their religious sentiments, is an utter impossibility: *absolute* and *infallible certainty* in regard to divine things, being the result of divine testimony entering the conscience as such, and of this cause alone.

Scepticism is thus, Mr. Barclay saw, far from being confined to the irreligious merely. Nay, that species of it which obtains among the religious classes of the community is, of the two, decidedly its more dangerous form. Under the pretence of upholding divine truth, this traitorous principle is doing all that it can to sap and undermine it.—To attack and oppose scepticism, especially when assuming the garb and language of piety, and thereby to put the ignorant and the unwary on their guard against it, was the grand object of the author in the composition of the following pages.

Admirably has he succeeded in demolishing what is commonly denominated *natural religion*. This is one of those idols which the apparently pious, and the openly profane,—which the Unitarian and the Calvinist,—curiously but consistently enough, have concurred in setting up. “God hath means of revealing himself to the conscience, over and above his written word,” say

they. "Of these means he hath in every age availed himself. Heathens, thereby, have been brought to the knowledge of his character. Nay, were it not for the existence of those natural notices of himself wherewith he hath stored abundantly the mind of man, to what," triumphantly exclaim they, "could he address, upon what could he fasten, an express revelation of himself?" To Mr. Barclay's inimitable method of dealing with this sophism, which is a virtual attack on the necessity, nature, and efficacy of revelation, I refer the reader. Nothing can be conceived more pointed, complete, and satisfactory, than his exposure of Clarke's celebrated *à priori* demonstration. Even Lord Brougham's, contained in his recent work, is tame compared with it.*

But the great excellence of the following treatise, as well as of Mr. Barclay's other works, is its thorough refutation of that all-pervading, mind-harassing, sceptical principle, *the existence of doubts and fears respecting their future state in the breasts of believers*. "One who credits the divine testimony concerning Christ Jesus may often be very uncertain, and consequently may be filled with much anxiety and many fearful forebodings, as to what shall be his own personal state and circumstances hereafter. Indeed, such fears, so far from being injurious and therefore undesirable, are exceedingly salutary, as tending to promote watchfulness and humility; and fall to be ranked among the best evidences of his spiritual state which a child of God can possess." Such is the language of the most serious and popular of our religious

* See his Lordship's late work on Natural Theology.