

**BARCLAY'S APOLOGY FOR
THE TRUE CHRISTIAN
DIVINITY, AS PROFESSED BY
THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS**

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Barclay's Apology for the True Christian Divinity, as Professed by the People Called Quakers by
Robert Barclay & George Harrison

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ROBERT BARCLAY & GEORGE HARRISON

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Barclay's Apology

FOR THE

TRUE CHRISTIAN DIVINITY,

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ABRIDGED

BY

GEORGE HARRISON.

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PREFATORY ADDRESS

TO THE READER.

I AM aware that some men of erudition and of leisure, entertain an unfavourable opinion of abridgments, and, as it respects works of science, this opinion has some weight; but, in application to tracts on religion and morals, I think there is just ground to doubt its propriety. Is it not obvious, that if the quintessence of many valuable works, ancient and modern, on religious and moral subjects, were comprised and dispersed in an octavo volume, greater and more general advantage would accrue to the community at large, than by the original works, which are much confined to the shelves of expensive libraries, in the shape of ponderous quartos and folios?

But in any case, to render an abridgment acceptable, the original should be of acknowledged reputation and utility. These qualities will not be denied to *Barclay's Apology*, first published in the year 1678; and yet it is not read so generally as it deserves to be, owing, it may be presumed, to its having been composed in a manner, though very suitable to the state of literature in the seventeenth

century, yet not adapted to the taste of reading in the present times. With some, and those not a few, the length of the work may be an objection; for which reason it may fail of being useful to families, and persons unacquainted with learned subjects; and yet these are the people, as has been elsewhere justly observed, who seem most to stand in need of a clear and judicious explanation of the principles of religion, and on whom the practice of it should be enforced by the most convincing arguments.

It seems proper to apprise the reader, that in contracting the work and forming this abridgment, care has been used to reject nothing which amounts to an argument, or which is not elsewhere implied or insisted on.

The authorities of the Fathers I have not considered of essential import, agreeably to the sentiment of our Author himself, who, in speaking of the Fathers, very frankly says, that "there are few of them to be found, who do not only frequently contradict one another, but themselves also."—PROP. x. Sec. 22. Moreover, in speaking of the Scriptures, he says: "For our parts, we are very willing that *all* our doctrines and practices be tried by them;" and further: "We do look upon them as the only fit outward judge of controversy among Christians," (PROP. iii. Sec. 6.) conformably to the observation of Chillingworth, that the Bible contains the religion of Protestants. And if I may use the

expression, I should say, that the New Testament is the Magna Charta of Christians*. Without some particular interposition of Providence, in what darkness would the world at this time be involved, if the illumination of the Scriptures had been withheld! and by what perplexities have authors embarrassed themselves and their readers, by extending the field of controversy, in regard to the tenets of the Christian religion, beyond the limits of Scripture!

Let none, therefore, (to use a term frequently adopted by our Author,) *sottishly* decry learning in the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek; seeing, without it we should never have had one sentence of the Old or New Testament, in our own or any other modern language. What then would have become of the glorious attempt to diffuse the knowledge of the Scriptures to the uttermost limit of the habitable world!

It is strange that any serious person, in his zeal for religion, should endeavour to form an argument against the utility of learning. Whoever is conversant with the pages of Sacred History, must have

* Bishop Andrews, disputing with Cardinal Perron about ceremonies, urged, that man ought not to add to God's word, lest he lose his part in the Book of Life. The politic Cardinal asked, Why then do you retain the cross in baptism? The Bishop answered, Because authority enjoins it. And for the same reason, replied the Cardinal, do we retain all the rest of the ceremonies.

remarked three notable instances of men of great distinction for learning being selected by Divine Wisdom, for purposes of the highest importance to religion and morals.

Not to mention any others, Moses, Daniel, and the apostle Paul, are such instances. The first, largely imbued with the learning of Egypt, the school of literature and science in the Heathen world, was the appointed lawgiver of the children of Israel. Of him, that eminent scholar Dionysius Longinus testifies, *that he was no common man**. The second lived in a country where learning and the sciences were successfully cultivated; in these Daniel was pre-eminently distinguished, and qualified to achieve the purposes of Divine Wisdom.

The apostle Paul, more learned unquestionably than any of the apostles, and accurately versed in the rabbinical doctrines, is a signal instance of the importance of learning, when sanctified and directed to the purpose of promoting the cause of religion and virtue. He was commissioned the Apostle to the Gentiles, the qualified instrument to spread the glad tidings of the gospel, and to promulgate the doctrines of Christ to the nations around, amongst whom the Greek was at that time generally spoken or understood.

In the writings of the Greek authors, Paul was obviously conversant, as appears by the frequent

* ὁ τῶν Ἰουδαίων θεολογικῶν, ὅχι ὁ τῶν ἄλλων.—Longinus.

quotations from them, incorporated with his Epistles. The same learned author, Longinus, places him amongst the most distinguished characters of Greece; after naming Demosthenes, Lysias, Æschines, Aristides, and others, he classes with them Paul of Tarsus*.

Learning and science, like all other qualifications, may be perverted and abused; they are, therefore, no certain or necessary guides to the individual accomplishment of that most important of all purposes, the purpose of religion; but sanctified to us by divine goodness, they are of most essential benefit. Here let it be noted, that before they can be sanctified to us, we must possess them. But let me be correctly understood: I do not speak of learning and science as convertible terms with that knowledge, of which the prophet under divine commission speaks, when he says: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected

* προς ταυτοις Παυλος ο Ταρσειος, εν τω και πρωτοι φημι προσηκουσων λογματος αναπρωδικτη.—Longinus.

On the preceding quotation the Editor thinks it incumbent upon him to remark, that although it stands in both Pearce's and Toup's editions of Longinus, as a fragment, contained in a manuscript copy of the Gospels, preserved in the Vatican library, yet Fabricius declares that it is not genuine; and Dr. Lardner, whose authority is of the first order, seems to coincide with him in opinion.

See Lardner's Works, 8vo. edit. vol. 8. pp. 166, 167.

Fabricius, Bib. Græc. tom. 4. p. 445.