

# Why does bartleby refuse the aid of the lawyer?

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Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* is a confusing work of literature. Some researchers think that in the story Melville described himself. Some others think that this is because of madness that Bartleby behaves so weird and finally, dies. In reality, Bartleby refuses to check some copies, but that cannot mean he is mad.

On the contrary, he chooses this himself. He chooses how to live his life and how to behave. Many people think his life is utopian. Many people also cannot understand why he behaves this way. Melville tries to prove that Bartleby has his principles and cannot betray them.

That is why he refuses to accept aid from the Lawyer because he thinks that this aid will destroy his principles and his life. Of course, every person has his principles, and that does not mean that every person is mad. On the contrary, people who have their principles cannot be mad. They are reasonable and conscious, even when their ideas seem to be utopian. "The utopian spirit as we have been discussing it, is revealed through the written words of men who were critical of the world they lived in and dreamers of a better world" (Anonymous). And Bartleby, too, sees the world with a critical eye.

On the one hand, he does not want to accept this world as he sees it. On the other hand and because he cannot accept this world as he sees it, he also creates his own world. This world is very comfortable to him, and Bartleby does not want anyone to interfere. "His face was leanly composed; his gray eye dimly calm. Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other

words, had there been any thing ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises" (Melville).

Melville describes Bartleby as a very calm and balanced person. When he refuses to check the copies he does not show that is he worried or disturbed. He sees that the Lawyer is getting very angry and disturbed. He also sees that the Lawyer is becoming very irritated. If Bartleby were insane, he would not be able to preserve balance and calmness. If he were insane he would be more emotional with the Lawyer. Moreover, he is very confident that his principles of life are very correct. If he were not that confident, he would not make the Lawyer so much curious about himself.

He would not be able to be so calm and to defend his principles. When he answers the Lawyer's questions he does not lose his patience, because he knows that his principles are the best and that he has the right to use these principles in his life. He also knows that the Lawyer cannot break these principles. When he defends them he seems solid like a stone. But he also fears of losing these principles and his stability. That is why he does not want to answer the Lawyer's questions: " Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?

- I would prefer not to. - Will you tell me anything about yourself? - I would prefer not to" (Melville). It is very probable that Bartleby has his own theory of life. He knows that the Lawyer wants to help him, but he also knows that if he accepts this aid, he will not be able to live as he lived before. He will not be able to protect his principles from the Lawyer. The story about Bartleby shows how difficult it is for a person to be successful. It is a material world. It values farms, goods, estates, and other material things.

Unfortunately, “ the ways of trade are grown selfish to the borders of theft, and supple to the borders of fraud. The employments of commerce are not intrinsically unfit for a man, or less genial to his faculties, but these are now in their general course so vitiated by derelictions and abuses at which all connive, [...] that nothing is left him but to begin the world anew...” (Emerson). That is why to avoid these problems Bartleby creates his own world. In this world he has no obligations. He can do what he wants. He can refuse checking the copies. He can refuse working.

He can also refuse leaving the office. This world is very different from the one in which we live. Still, this is the world in which Bartleby wants to live. Bartleby does not have a house; he does not speak about his past; he does not speak of anything at all and spends all his time at the Lawyer’s office at Wall Street. One day he refuses to fulfill his working obligations. He is not willing to leave the office; nor is he willing to leave the Lawyer. Unfortunately, no one can understand Bartleby. Everyone thinks he is insane. For this reason, he becomes a vagrant and soon dies.

But what can happen if some day Bartleby decided not to refuse the Lawyer’s aid? Would this aid help Bartleby return to the normal world? No, it would not, but would make it more difficult for Bartleby to defend his principles. If he accepted the aid, he would also have to accept all other norms of the modern world. However, because Bartleby is so active and brave in his wish to protect his principles and his life, he influences and changes everyone around him: “ Somehow, of late I had got into the way of involuntary using this word ‘ prefer’ upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions.

And I trembled to think that my contact with the scrivener had already and seriously affected me in a mental way" (Melville). That is why Bartleby's behavior is not because of his madness but because of his strength and power, which he uses to live. When he refuses the Lawyer's aid he also builds a wall between himself and the rest of the world. He does not want the Lawyer to become a part of his world. He is an idealist. His world is utopian.

Many of us would want to live the life in the same way, but not all of us would be able to protect their principles from influence. Conclusion Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* is one of the most confusing works of literature. On the one hand, readers cannot understand who Bartleby is, who he was, and who he wants to be. On the other hand, everything we read about Bartleby looks like the story about a mad man. In reality, it is not madness, and Bartleby himself chose his life and his principles.

Moreover, he wants to protect his life and his principles from anyone's influence. That is why he refuses to accept the Lawyer's aid, because he is afraid that the aid will destroy his principles, his life, and the world he has created for himself. Works Cited Anonymous. "About Utopia and Utopian Literature." Emerson, R. W. "Man the Reformer." A Lecture Read Before the Mechanics' Apprentices' Library Association, Boston, January 25, 1841. Melville, H. "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street." Virginia Commonwealth University, 1853.