

THE REVEREND
RICHARD BAXTER
UNDER THE CROSS
(1662–1691)

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THE REVEREND
RICHARD BAXTER
UNDER THE CROSS
(1662–1691)

Books by the Same Author

JOHN NORRIS OF BEMERTON

HENRY BARROW, SEPARATIST

THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS, ETC.

A LIFE OF THE REVEREND RICHARD BAXTER,
1615-1691

THE REVEREND
RICHARD BAXTER
UNDER THE CROSS
(1662–1691)

by

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CONTENTS

PART ONE

I	INTRODUCTORY, 1662-1669	15
1	AT MOORFIELDS, 1662-3	17
2	AT ACTON, 1663-9	20
2	1670-1673	39
1	TOTTERIDGE	39
2	CORRESPONDENTS	46
3	STUDENT AND WRITER	60
4	BACK IN LONDON	66
5	MRS BAXTER	100
6	BAXTER'S POOR KINDRED AND WILLIAM BAXTER	109
7	1678-1685	128
1	THE POPISH PLOT	128
2	A FIERY TIME	132
3	ROGER L'ESTRANGE	136
4	THE TRIAL	143
5	BETWEEN TRIAL AND SENTENCE	146
6	IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE	150
7	WORK IN PRISON	159
8	CHARTERHOUSE YARD, 1687-91	164

PART TWO

I	BAXTER'S NONCONFORMIST PLEAS FOR PEACE	185
2	THE IRRECONCILABLES	199
1	SEPARATISTS	199
2	PRELATISTS	211
3	BAXTER'S CHURCHMANSHIP	226
4	BAXTERIANISM	233
5	AN APPRECIATION	253

APPENDICES (I—II)	267
1 THE ADENEY (OR ADNEY) DESCENT	267
2 SIR MATTHEW HALE AND THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE	268
3 SUGGESTED CONFORMISTS' PETITION FOR RELIEF OF NONCONFORMITY	270
4 BAXTER'S ESTIMATE OF CHARLES II	273
5 SUPPRESSED PASSAGE ABOUT MRS BAXTER	275
6 ILLUSTRATION OF BAXTER'S CATHOLICITY	277
7 BAXTER AND DR SHERLOCK	282
8 BAXTER'S OWN ACCOUNT OF THE CAUSE OF HIS IMPRISONMENT (1685)	285
9 DAVID WILLIAMS'S BILL OF CHARGES	286
10 SYLVESTER'S DESCRIPTION OF BAXTER	288
11 ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON'S LETTER TO SYLVESTER	291
INDEX OF PERSONS	297
INDEX OF SUBJECTS	308

PREFACE

THE first volume of this *Life of Baxter* left off at his marriage to Margaret Charlton (September 10, 1662), who bravely stepped out with him into the dark days which she knew were coming; and never bated one jot of heart or hope all the nineteen years of their companionship. What she was in herself, and what she did for her husband, have not, I think, been sufficiently realized; and so it seems but right that an endeavour should be made to give her a due place in the story which follows. One of the best tributes to her character, and, in a less degree, to Baxter's, may be found in the way she took charge of his poor relations; and, particularly, of his 'Cousin' William Baxter, who, thanks mainly to her generous care, was enabled to fashion a career of some distinction for himself. The facts of the case are recorded in a series of letters not hitherto made use of, even if known; and the chapter which narrates them will be felt to possess a considerable measure of human interest.

But, of course, Baxter himself here, as in the first volume, is the central figure. He comes before us in his last thirty years as a striking example of the repressed life. Preaching and the Pastoral care of souls were for him, not merely a duty to which he was pledged by his ordination vows, but a passionate necessity—his meat and drink. Yet from 1661 he was doomed to silence. One must grasp this fact, and the agony of it, if one would appreciate the depth of conviction which drew him into the course that involved it. Had he been able to find the smallest loophole for his conscience, how gladly would he have remained in the Church! But he found none and had to stand outside. This is the all-important point to note. At the same time, though outside the Church, he was a Churchman still. He loved the Church infinitely more than did thousands of easy-going Conformists. Hence:

- (1) he conformed, as far as he could;
- (2) he did his utmost to persuade others to do likewise;
- (3) he welcomed every advance, from the side of the Church, which even hinted at a desire for peace on terms of justice;
- (4) he never tired, meanwhile, of pressing for a recognition

of the really essential and Catholic truths, as the one sure ground of unity;

(5) he deplored the persecuting Acts and the violent enforcement of them, not merely because of their gross injustice, and the suffering brought upon himself and, far more, upon hundreds of his brethren; but, especially, because the effect was to widen the breach and harden the Separatists in their irreconcilable attitude;

(6) he resented, with intensified vehemence as time went on, the principles of the High Church party, as represented by the Bishops generally—principles which, to his mind, identified them with a persecuting policy; and rendered them in their own way as irreconcilable as the Separatists.

These are among the points which it seemed well worth while to emphasise: for they were emphasised by Baxter himself; and the last, at least, is with us still as a live issue. But the spirit of Baxter, though often chafed to the utterance of strong and bitter words, was always ready and eager to meet both Prelatists and Separatists on the ground of his and their common Christianity, if ever he perceived an inclination to acknowledge it. And there is every reason why his spirit, in this respect, should still be allowed to have its way. There is, indeed, no other hope of a final agreement—even to differ.

For the rest, attention may be drawn to the chapter on 'Baxterianism' which, with the letters to and from Edward Fowler, seems to establish a considerable affinity with the Cambridge Platonists; and also, to the new material, furnished mostly by the Baxter MSS. which appears in the sections dealing with Baxter's Trial, and the interval between his Trial and sentence, and the circumstances of his release, and his work during the time of his confinement, and his last days in Charterhouse Yard. However variously the intrinsic value of such material may be estimated, at any rate it may be said to impart a certain measure of completeness to the picture.

Hardly a reference to it occurs in Sylvester. Calamy reports little more about Baxter's last days beyond the preamble to his will. Orme repeats the silence of Calamy; and later writers have added little or nothing. All the same, I am acutely conscious of many remaining gaps; and of all I have had to

omit. I can only hope—and not a few recent signs of a revived interest in Baxter encourage me to hope—that some younger student, or students, will trace out my deficiencies and make them good. There is a mine of unsifted wealth in the Baxter MSS. and in Baxter's own books, waiting to reward the diligent seeker. And perhaps the best reward will be found in the fact that, through Baxter, the great movements and personalities of the seventeenth century become wonderfully alive; and, still more, in the fact that contact with him means a perpetual renewal of moral and spiritual inspiration.

Lastly, I want to say a word with regard to Matthew Sylvester, Baxter's first biographer. In any strict sense the name does not apply to him. It is clear from Archbishop Tillotson's answer (February 3, 1691–2) to his request for advice, that Sylvester's first intention was to carry on Baxter's own story (which breaks off in January 1684–5) to the end, if not to write a consecutive life from the beginning. 'I return you my thanks'—says the Archbishop—'for yours, and am glad to hear that you intend to write our Rev and beloved Baxter's life. You do it not only, or chiefly, to satisfy some people's curiosity, nor to honour him who will live in his works, but to give glory to God, and benefit those that shall read it, and therefore, Sir, I would not have you make too much haste in it (in which many will be pressing you), but take time enough to do it well' . . . 'and I doubt not but you will digest things under several heads, as concerning his piety, temperance, charity, preaching, writings, reproaches, sufferings (insisting especially on that before my Lord Jeffreys), his patience, etc., and of his life in the several places where he resided. His writings, his conversations with you and many others In London, will furnish you abundantly. . . .'¹

Something, however, checked Sylvester—perhaps the growing infirmities of age; or, quite as likely, a nervous sense of his own incompetence. All he did during the next five years was to copy out the MS. which Baxter had bequeathed to him. On the whole, he did this faithfully. But there is a problem. To judge from his own words (in the Preface to *R.B.*) to the effect that he thought it a sort of sacrilege to omit or alter

¹ He goes on to give some of his own reminiscences. See Appendix 10.

anything in the MS, one would expect the copy to be meticulously exact. On the contrary, comparison with what has been preserved of the MS. shows that there are frequent omissions and alterations and deviations from Baxter's written directions.

Calamy, indeed, claims¹ that some of these were due to his own insistence. He found Sylvester 'chary of the MS. in the last degree and not very forward to let it be seen'. And when at length he 'obtained the favour' of it and decided that 'several passages' would be 'likely to do more hurt than good' he found the good man so averse from 'alterations of any sort' that his feeling amounted to 'a sort of superstition'. But, after prolonged refusal, he yielded so far as to let Calamy curtail the highly coloured description of Sylvester's own character² and to blot 'out 'some few reflections on persons and families of distinction'; and, above all, to tone down the charge against Dr Owen in connection with 'the affair of Wallingford House'.³

But granting all this; and, further, that Calamy may have procured the deletion of a passage⁴ in which Baxter cites, with a protest, a printed report of the King's licentious character during his exile; or a passage⁵ in which Baxter relates naïvely how once at Gloucester he was upset by 'one glass of sack' taken on an empty stomach after six hours of preaching and praying in the Cathedral, yet it does not account for other omissions. Why, and by whom, e.g., was the story of Lauderdale's dealings with Baxter on the eve of the Restoration omitted; and the story of Mrs Baxter's death; and, especially, a very long and important passage covering nearly three folios of the MS.? There is a mystery here which possibly a more thorough collation of the MS. and the printed Text might clear up; and I hope it will be undertaken. Meanwhile, I can but give my impression that some of the changes may have been made by Baxter himself; and some by Calamy, as the book passed through the press;⁶ and some by Sylvester, out of over-

1 Historical account of my own life. Vol. I, pp. 376-80.

2 See *R.B.* III, 96, § 5. 3 *Ibid.*, I, 101.

4 *Ibid.*, I, 218, between §§ 82 and 83. 5 *Ibid.*, I., 41, between §§ 58 and 59.

6 It was he who drew up the contents and made the index.

sight, or a sudden access of timidity. This would but bear out what one gathers from his confused and unwieldy preface, that he was very unfitted for his task.

In conclusion, it is a pleasure again to acknowledge, with sincere gratitude, my indebtedness to the Trustees of Dr Williams's Library for allowing me untrammelled access to the B. MSS., as well as to their Librarian, Mr Stephen K. Jones, M.A., for his always ready helpfulness, and I must, also, express my very sincere thanks to the Rev Principal McLachlan, D.D., Summerville College, Manchester, for his generous care and trouble in making the Index.

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N.B.—The old spelling in this volume has been modernized throughout.

R.B. = *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*

B. = *Breviate of the Life of Margaret Baxter.*

D.N.B. = *Dictionary of National Biography.*

S.P.D. = *State Papers Domestic.*

E.R.E. = *Hasting's Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.*

M.R. = *Monthly Repository.*

N.M. = *Palmer's Nonconformist's Memorial.*

PART ONE

CHAPTER I (1662–1669)
INTRODUCTORY

THE Act of Uniformity received the royal assent on Monday, May 19, 1662, and became law—to take effect from Sunday, August 24, St. Bartholomew's day. But Baxter laid down his ministry in the Church on Sunday, May 25, that is, as soon as possible. On that day he preached his last sermon (at Blackfriars) from the text, Colossians ii. 6, 7.¹ He thus anticipated the appointed day of decision by three months, partly to manifest respect for the law which, according to the lawyers, put an end to his liberty as a Lecturer² at once; partly to let all ministers in England understand whether he intended to conform or not.³ He did not preach again in a parish Church for the next thirteen years. What were his feelings at this time? They were those of a broken heart. Writing to an anonymous Independent (January 9, 1689/10), who had done more than hint that his Nonconformity had cost him little, he says with reference to that dark hour—'I lay in tears, in deepest sorrow, when our overturners had done their work, in which I know who were, to the amazement and consternation of my soul, the chief instruments of all the rest.'⁴ There is here the mysterious suggestion of what to Baxter was unexpected and very painful treachery; and this, added to the thought of his vanished dream of concord, and the flood of miseries now

¹ Published in enlarged form as part III of *The Divine Life*, 1664. There is no reference in it to the circumstances. In a mutilated and repudiated form it appeared at once.

² This was his only official link to the Church, after his silencing by the Bishop of Worcester in August 1661.

³ *R.B.*, II, 384.

⁴ Baxter MSS. (Letters) ii, ff. 93^{ab}–4. Some other sentences are very carefully erased, and it is added—'I know what I say . . . (This is only between you and me).'

Cp. 'The wilful dissolution of all Power and Order' (in 1661) 'cast me into those Groans and Tears which I can never on Earth forget!' Postscript (§ 4.37) to '*An Account of the Reasons . . . i.e. Dr Owen's Twelve Arguments against Communion with Parish Churches* (1684).

certain to descend upon the Church, and the enormous scandal to religion, and not least, the loss of all regular opportunity for that preaching of the Gospel which was his life, filled him with anguish. But not with bitterness. He grieved over the bitterness displayed by his Nonconformist brethren; and especially, perhaps, by those of London. ‘When Bartholomew-day came’ (he says) ‘about one thousand eight hundred or two thousand Ministers were silenced and cast out; and the affections of most men thereupon were such as made me fear it was a prognostic of our further sufferings. For when Pastors and people should have been humbled for their sins and lamented their former negligences and unfruitfulness, most of them were filled with disdain and indignation against the Prelates and were ready with confidence to say, “God will not suffer so wicked and cruel a generation of men; it will be but a little while till God will pull them down. And thus men were puffed up by other men’s sinfulness and kept from a kindly humbling of themselves”.’¹ For his own part, he did not yet cast away hope of the Bishops. He thought they had been moved by a passion of prejudice not unnatural under the circumstances. He thought that, in this way, they had been blind to the right course; and that they might learn better by experience. Before long he had to change his mind; but, meanwhile, he resolved to be patient and silent. He resolved to find out in himself what may have been wrong. He resolved, in a word, to do and say nothing which might tend to bolt and bar the door, or make a return to the Church impossible. One result of this Christian attitude was his practice, from the first, of attendance at morning, if not evening, Prayer; and, also, at Holy Communion. Wherever he happened to be, Sunday found him in the parish Church, unless prevented by illness or some other special obstacle. He went for the whole service, sermon as well as prayers; and listened to the former with thankful appreciation of anything in it that was good. As

¹ *R.B.*, II, 385. His statement here that about ‘1,800 or 2,000 ministers were silenced’ drew upon him the accusation of ‘knowingly’ suggesting a larger than the actual number—to which he answered that (1) Mr Calamy showed him a list of 1,800, and (2) Mr Ennis afterwards assured him that they had ‘an account of at least 200 more,’ so ‘I sometime—to speak the least—mention the 1,800 and sometime say about 2,000—by his last account, that was the least.’—*History of Councils*, p. 231.

we shall see later, this practice exposed him to immense obloquy; but it implied not the least insincerity. Though no longer a minister of the Church, he still considered himself a member. He could not remain a minister of the Church because he could not swear assent and consent to all its latest demands, but he was a member in virtue of his baptism; and its liturgy, on the whole, was by no means offensive to him. He had never condemned a liturgical form of worship as in itself unlawful. On the contrary, he had affirmed, and elaborately maintained, its lawfulness even in his Kidderminster days, as far back as 1653,¹ when, to do so, was rather unpopular than otherwise; while, with regard to the English liturgy, he held it to be the best in Christendom, apart from certain details which, merely as a worshipper, he found it possible to ignore. If we are inclined to say that his Nonconformity cannot therefore have amounted to much, the answer is, that the wide extent of his conformity does but serve to prove how deeply grounded his Nonconformity must have been.

I

AT MOORFIELDS (1662-3)

But, for the present, we will turn to the narrative of his life. An anonymous but intimate letter addressed to him on March 31, 1662, makes it clear that he was then living at Dr Micklethwaite's,² in Little Britain. The Doctor's house was not far from Margaret Charlton's lodgings in Sweeting's Alley (Aldersgate), and the fact that the writer should commend his 'service to your espoused wife' implies that their espousal was known at least a month before the issue of the marriage licence on April 29.³ In the absence of any reason to the contrary, we may assume that Baxter continued to live with the Doctor till his marriage in St Benet Fink Church (Bishopgate), on September 10. Then he took his wife to a house in Moorfields—a house which he leased for £20 per annum and in connection

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), iii, ff. 1^{ab}-2^{ab}. A Dissertation—Dec. 8, 1653—on the question 'Whether it be lawful to use set forms of prayer.'

² 1612-1682, President of Society of Surgeons, and knighted in 1681. See D.N.B.

³ See vol. i, p. 217, note 1. Baxter MSS. (Letters), iv, ff. 191^{ab}-2^b. and cf. *infra*, p. 187, note 2.

with which, at a later time, there arose a slanderous report. Moorfields, outside the wall to the north of Moorgate and south of Bunhill Fields, was almost pure country, consisting of pleasant walks, set with trees for shade and ornament. A map of 1658 shows the district as divided into three sections—Upper Moorfields, Upper Walks of Moorfields, and Lower Walks. Houses there are none, except four at the N.E. of the Lower Walks; and, if these were all in 1662, Baxter's must have been one of them. The quiet of such a home was congenial to him and not less to his wife—both country bred. But it turned out to be not quiet enough. The city was so near that he had many visitors, and lost much of his precious time. Then, too, the marshiness of the soil was found to be unwholesome. But more than that, Baxter became aware that he was an object of peculiar suspicion, and closely watched.² Reports were abroad, which may have reached him, that he sometimes went off to preach, or encourage seditious meetings, at places far away from Moorfields;³ and, worse than all, the turn of events soon disappointed him of any near improvement in the general situation. True, the king expressed, in December, a purpose to grant some indulgence or liberty in religion to tender consciences; but he had no mind to defy his Parliament, and, when both Lords and Commons agreed in an almost unanimous protest, he gave way (February 28, 1662–3).

As a result, the Uniformity Act began to be more strictly applied. Already, in January, it had been so construed—against the opinion of some lawyers—as to authorize the committal of Mr Calamy (late the popular minister of Aldermansbury) to Newgate, merely for preaching a funeral sermon for the Rev. Simeon Ash in his old pulpit, and, though this entailed upon him no great hardship,⁴ yet the case showed what spirit

¹ He was accused of letting it, when he removed to Acton, to a poor woman for £30 and distraining on her goods when she couldn't pay. He recites how the accusation arose, in Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vii, if. 96^{ab}–7^{ab}, which treats of this and other slanders.

² *R.B.*, II, 444.

³ *S.P.D.* CIX, 143, § 56. The suggested date is 1664 but it must have been earlier.

⁴ *R.B.*, II, 386. See *H.C. Journals*, vol. viii, Feb. 19, 1662–3, p. 437; March 9, 1662–3, p. 446.

was at work; and, presently, Baxter himself had a sharp taste of it. He, with a few friends, had agreed to meet at the house of one Mr Beal to pray for his wife who lay sick of a dangerous fever. It happened that Baxter and Dr Bates could not be there, but it was known at Westminster that they were appointed to be there. 'Whereupon two Justices of Peace were procured to come . . . with the Parliament Sergeant-at-Arms, to apprehend us.' They came; found that part of the company was gone; entered the room where the Gentlewoman lay ready to die; drew the curtains; took down the names of those present; and returned disappointed. 'Yet that same week there was published a witty malicious invective against the silenced Ministers in which it was affirmed that Dr Bates and I were at Mr Beal's house keeping a conventicle.'¹ Such an experience was a trifle compared with that of many others. Both in London and in various parts of the country 'abundance were laid in jails for preaching; and the vexation of the People's souls was increased'.² Their vexation, it appears, was mixed with a fear which was natural, but rather ignoble.

'There were many citizens in London who had then a great compassion on the ministers, whose families were destitute of maintenance, and fain they would have relieved them, and had such a method that the citizens of each county should help the Ministers of that county. But they durst not do it, lest it were judged a conspiracy.' In this juncture, Baxter ventured to interview the Lord Chancellor Hyde; and told him plainly that compassion moved them, but that the suspicions of these dis-tempered times deterred them; and I desired to have his Lordship's judgment, whether they might venture to be so charitable without misinterpretation or danger? And he answered, *aye, God forbid but men should give their own according as their charity leads them.* And so having his preconsent, I gave it them for encouragement. But they would not believe that it was cordial and would be a security to them; and so they never durst venture upon such a method which might have made their charity effectual.³ Only a few showed any forwardness to run the risk.

1 R.B., II, 432. 2 *Ibid.*, II, 386, 432. 3 *Ibid.*, II, 386.

We see, then, that regard for his health and more quiet, was not the only, or even chief reason, of his removal from Moorfields.

2

ACTON (1663–9)

Acton, or the place of Oaks, so named from the extensive Oak forests which, at one time, surrounded it, lay near the east end of Middlesex—a county ‘very pleasant and healthy, to which a fine gravelly soil does not a little contribute.’¹ It was not only pleasant and healthy, but also not too far from London to forbid occasional visits and intercourse with friends. Moreover, it was comparatively safe. Here, then, he settled and here he lived for six years, in the course of which he occupied successively two and perhaps three houses. One of these, and the one he seems to have occupied longest, he describes as a small house and the meanest he ever lived in. Only, it had a pleasant backside,² a detail which he mentions because it was this which attracted Sir Matthew Hale and led him to buy it as soon as he knew of Baxter’s wish to vacate it. His last house, which stood close to the parish Church of St. Mary, with only the road between, was great by comparison; and he had it on his hands, at a great rent, when his troubles forced him away.

Sir Matthew Hale (1609–76) came to Acton in 1667. He was at that time Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer and did not become Lord Chief Justice of the King’s Bench till May 17, 1671. In both these high stations he won the highest kind of reputation. No other judge excelled, or even equalled him, in justice and legal skill, while scholars honoured him for his great learning. Baxter rejoiced to have him for a neighbour, but did not call upon him or seek his acquaintance at first. He feared to compromise him. Though they sat near each other in Church nothing passed between them until Sir Matthew spoke to him. Then, the ice once broken, they soon grew intimate.

¹ *‘England displayed . . .’* p. 150 (1769).

² So Baxter; but it appears that the ‘pleasant backside’ meant ‘a fruitful field, grove and garden, surrounded by a remarkably high, deeply founded and long extended wall.’ It was said to have belonged to Skippon (d. March 1660), Cromwell’s Major General for London and District (1655).

It became a habit with them to talk over what they were reading or writing, and to exchange mutual criticism. On current ecclesiastical controversies they tacitly agreed to say little; but the Judge's opinion of the persecuting acts was well known, while his open countenance of Baxter personally was as marked as he could make it. When the people 'crowded in and out of my house to hear' (says Baxter) 'he openly showed me so great respect before them at the door and never spoke a word against it, as was no small encouragement to the common people to go on, though the other sort muttered that a Judge should seem so far to countenance that which they took to be against the Law.' But what Baxter most admired in him was his really Puritan character. 'He was most precisely just, in so much as I believe he would have lost all he had in the world rather than do an unjust act . . . the pillar of Justice, the Refuge of the subject who feared oppression . . . every man that had a just cause was almost past fear, if they could but bring it to the Court or Assize where he was Judge (for the other Judges seldom contradicted him). . . . His great advantage for innocency was that he was no lover of riches or grandeur. His garb was too plain; he studiously avoided all unnecessary familiarity with great persons, and all that manner of living which signifieth wealth and greatness.' In the house which he took from Baxter he lived out his days—'contentedly, without any pomp, and without costly or troublesome retinue or visitors; but not without charity to the poor. . . . Those that take no men for religious, who frequent not private meetings, etc., took him for an excellently righteous moral man; but I, that have heard and read his serious expressions of the concernments of Eternity, and seen his love to all good men, and the blamelessness of his life, etc., thought better of his piety than of mine own.'¹

It is a curious circumstance that two carved heads in the arch of the west doorway of St Mary's tower were afterwards said to represent those of Hale and Baxter. The tradition will not bear examination; but it testifies, at any rate, to the fact of their friendship and to the local impression which this made. He mentions no other friends belonging to Acton, unless we might count Sir John Trevor (1626–72), Secretary of State, 'who is

¹ *R.B.*, III, 4–7; cp. 176. See Appendix 2.

described as of Channel Row, Middlesex.’ Their friendship is unlikely, but that they were acquainted appears from a letter of Lord Ashley¹ to Sir John in which he begs him to get Baxter’s written judgment on the question whether a protestant lady might marry a Papist in hope of his conversion. The lady was a friend of Ashley’s and one His Majesty was very much concerned for . . . and ‘none’ (wrote his Lordship) ‘but that worthy divine Mr Baxter can satisfy the lady’. This letter, sent to him by Sir John on July 20, 1665, ‘at six o’clock afternoon’, Baxter thought too important to be answered straight away. So he took time till the next morning. Then he wrote something which the lady felt to be ambiguous, and his Lordship wrote again to say that she would not consent unless Baxter clearly satisfied her that the marriage was lawful. Baxter was not the man to say a thing merely to please; and his reasoned answer, addressed to Sir John for transmission to the noble lord, was by no means what was desired. If, then, he and the King were not disinterested parties, as seems likely, they might not scruple to suppress the letter or twist the sense, which explains the words—‘I humbly crave that if she be at all acquainted with my answer (or any one else) it may not be by report but by showing it her entire, as I have written it’. The upshot is not recorded, nor the lady’s name.²

Even such a small eddy in the placid current of his days was rare—at least during the first two years. Now and then he spent a day in London or a friend came to spend a day with him;³ and once, in the summer of 1664, he had ‘the company of divers godly faithful friends that tabled’ with him (paying guests?) and were a solace to him. One of his visits to London had for its object to confer with ‘some learned judicious moderate ministers’ about the vexed question of communion with parish Churches.” It took place in 1665 and may have detained him from home for more than a day.

But, on the whole, the daily routine of intense study, relieved

¹ Not yet Earl of Shaftesbury (1672); but Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in favour at Court.

² *R.B.*, II, 445–7.

³ e.g. “on May 10 (1667) Mr. Ashurst went with me to Acton to see Mr Baxter.” Henry Newcome’s *Autobiography*. Vol. I. p. 165.

⁴ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), iii, if. 1^{ab}–2^{ab}.

and cheered by domestic happiness, went on without any jar from the unquiet outside world. There were, however, one or two exceptions. Thus, on 'March 26, being the Lord's day 1665, as I was preaching in a private house where we received the Lord's Supper, a bullet came in at the window among us, and past by me, and narrowly missed the head of a sister-in-law of mine,¹ that was there, and hurt none of us; and we could never discover whence it came'. Then, in the following June, 'an ancient Gentlewoman with her sons and daughters came four miles in her coach to hear me preach in my family as out of special respect to me. It fell out that (contrary to our custom) we let her knock long at the door and did not open it; and so a second time when she had gone away and came again; and the third time she came when we had ended. She was so earnest to know when she might come again to hear me that I appointed her a time; but, before she came, I had secret intelligence from one that was nigh her, that she came with a heart exceeding full of malice, resolving, if possible, to do me what mischief she could by accusation. And so that danger was avoided'.² These incidents were a sharp reminder to him of that Conventicle Act which had been in operation since July 1664, and which forbade 'any meeting under colour or pretence of any exercise of religion in other manner than is allowed by the Liturgy or Practice of the Church of England, where there are five persons more than' the ordinary inmates of a household.³ Baxter, it would seem, had ignored the Act on the ground that it was so equivocal. No man he had met with could tell him what was a violation of it and what not. But according to what he took to be its plain words, if anyone did but as he did, i.e. 'preach and pray, or read some licensed book and sing Psalms, he might have more than four (five?) present because these are allowed by the practice of the Church in the Church'. He was destined to learn that the Justices who had the power, would listen to no such plea; and, but for the inrush of a tremendous calamity,

¹ The wife of Canon Upton.

² *R.B.*, II, 441.

³ Baxter (*R.B.*, II, 435) notes the Act as passed in June 1663; and it did pass the House of Commons on June 30. But the Lords did not send down their amendments till May 12, 1664, and the Bill was not agreed upon by both Houses till the 17th, when they were adjourned till August 20 (*H.C. Journals*, viii, pp. 514, etc.).

his experience of that fact would have come sooner. Early in July (1665) the plague broke out in London and upset everything. By the 29th it had spread to Acton; and raged there till March, carrying off so many that the churchyard became like ‘a plow’d field’ with graves. It has been alleged against him as a sign of selfish cowardice that, leaving most of his family at Acton, he went off to his friend Mr Richard Hampden—son of the great John—at Hampden in Buckinghamshire. Writing there on September 28 he speaks of himself as living in safety and comfort—through the mercy of God—while, at the same time, ‘8,000 and near three hundred’ a week were reported to be dying in London alone. But one sees at once that the frank simplicity with which he tells the story is proof that he himself—usually so quick to read his own motives—was conscious of nothing wrong in his conduct. If we use a little imagination we shall picture Mrs Baxter as the responsible party. She knew his physical weakness, and that his case would be hopeless if he took the infection. She believed with all her soul that his was a life of the utmost preciousness, and that the best means should be used to protect it. Then came the invitation from Mr Hampden and she made him accept it. Perhaps the invitation included herself as well, but she felt that her place was at home with the maids and that she could look after them and herself all the better with her husband away. Something like this, one may be sure, was the situation; and, if so, it was the dictate of good sense. By the time of his return to Acton in March 1666 the plague was stayed. About 100,000 died in London alone, and ‘the richer sort removing out of the city, the greatest blow fell on the poor’. ‘But one great benefit the Plague brought to the city, that is, it occasioned the silenced Ministers more openly and laboriously to preach the Gospel, to the exceeding comfort and profit of the people; insomuch that to this dayl the freedom of preaching which this occasioned cannot, by the daily Guards of Soldiers nor by the imprisonments of multitudes, be restrained. The Ministers that were silenced for nonconformity, had, ever since 1662, done their work very privately and to a few. . . .’ ‘But when the Plague grew hot, most of the conformable ministers fled and left

1 Nov. 1670.

their flocks . . . whereupon divers nonconformists, pitying the dying and distressed people . . . resolved that no obedience to the Laws of any mortal men whomsoever, could justify them for neglecting of men's souls and bodies in such extremities. . . . Therefore they resolved to stay with the people, and to go in to the forsaken Pulpits, though prohibited, and to preach to the poor people before they died, and also to visit the Sick, and get what relief they could for the poor, especially those that were shut up. . . . The face of death did so awaken both the preachers and the hearers, that preachers exceeded themselves in lively, fervent preaching, and the people crowded constantly to hear them, and all was done with so great seriousness as that, through the blessing of God, abundance was converted from their carelessness, impenitency, and youthful lusts and vanities; and religion took that hold on the people's hearts, as could never afterwards be loosed'.¹

It is in the light of this splendid Christian devotion, which might have been expected to conciliate all hearts, that we can see the meanness and cruelty of what, meanwhile, was done at Oxford. There the King and his court took refuge; and there by his command Parliament met on October 9. It sat till the 31st and, for the most part, dealt in the laziest way with the most trivial matters. Even the Plague could call forth no more serious measure than a Resolution to provide remedies by amending an Act of James I—a resolution which came to nothing. But it voted a subsidy of £125,000 to the King and another of £129,002 15s. 8d. for the Duke of York; it appointed a committee to tighten a former Act for regulating the Press; and it passed a Bill 'for restraining Nonconformists from corporations'. In this last, at any rate, the actors were serious and swift. Read a first time on the 14th, and remitted to a committee on the 17th, the amendments of the committee were accepted on the 21st, and on the 25th the Bill was engrossed.² There is not a hint of opposition from the Commons and only from one or two of the Lords. Hyde, the Lord Chancellor, carried with him the rest of them; and the Bishops, generally led by Sheldon, the Archbishop, were its chief promoters. Yet the Bill thus rushed into law had malice written on the face of

¹ *R.B.*, III, 2.

² *H.C. Journals*, viii, p. 613 if.

it. What else but malice, in the form of envy and jealousy, could wish to drive such ministers as were doing Christ's own work, and all their brethren, five miles away from 'any city or any corporation or any place that sent Burgesses to the Parliament, or any place wherever they had been Ministers or had preached since the Act of Oblivion'? Towns, of course, were the strongholds of Nonconformity. If in them its strength could be broken, it would stand a poor chance elsewhere. It might die of starvation. This, no doubt, was the motive at work; and, to make doubly sure of success, an oath was added which, as the Earl of Southampton, the Lord Treasurer, said in opposing it, *no honest man would take*.

'I, A. B. do swear that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the king; and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him in pursuance of such commissions; and that I will not at any time endeavour any alteration of government either in Church or State'.

Failure to take or receive this oath before March 24, 1666, entailed the said penalty of banishment automatically; and, if a non-compliant minister persisted in coming, or remaining, within forbidden areas, he forfeited £40 for every refusal of the oath, and might also be committed by any two Justices for six months without bail, or mainprize. Nor could such a minister, wherever he might live, teach any public or private school, or take any boarders or tablers that are taught or instructed by him or herself or any other.¹ If he did, £40 was the penalty. The pretext put forth to excuse this instrument of exquisite suffering to hundreds of innocent men and their families, was that they were fomenters of schism and sedition—a charge so groundless and injurious that Baxter at once wrote (but did not publish) a refutation of it. He did not publish it because some of his 'wise friends' thought it would do more harm than good, as things were; and the few friendly politicians who heard of it expressed surprise at his simplicity in supposing that any appeal to reason would be regarded by the sort of men he had to do with. Some of the London ministers—twenty or thirty of

¹ This means that the prohibition extended to the whole household.

them, including his dear friend Dr W. Bates—betrayed their simplicity in another way. They were induced to take the oath on the strength of what Dr Bates reported to be the avowed opinion of Lord Keeper Bridgman, that by the words ‘En-deavour any alteration of Government in Church, or State’, was meant only *unlawful* endeavour. But, too late, they found out that if such was Bridgman’s real opinion it was not that of the other Judges; and that he was not prepared to stand alone.¹ This was in February 1665–6. The Five Mile Act came into force on March 24, and Baxter tells us that during the next few months, ‘the number of ministers . . . either imprisoned, fined, or otherwise afflicted, so increased that he could not recount them’. Then came the forced distraction of the Great Fire. It broke out in Pudding Lane, on September 2; on the 3rd the Exchange was burnt; and in three days almost all the city within the walls, and much without them. Baxter from Acton was an eye-witness of the flames mounting up amid vast clouds of smoke in the east, while all around him ‘the air as far as could be beheld [was] so filled with the smoke that the Sun shined through it with a colour like blood, yea, even when it was setting in the west it so appeared to them that dwelt on the west side of the city’. As soon as it was safe he went into the city and describes what he saw—‘the fields filled with heaps of goods’ on the way; and, ‘dolefullest sight of all,’ the city turned into ‘a ruinous confused place . . . chimneys and steeples only standing in the midst of cellars and heaps of rubbish; so that it was hard to know where the streets had been, and dangerous, of a long time to pass through the ruins because of vaults and fire in them’. To him, however, the loss in houses and goods was less grievous than the loss of books. ‘Almost all the book-sellers in *St Paul’s* Churchyard brought their books into vaults under *St Paul’s* Church, where it was thought almost impossible that fire should come. But the church itself being on fire, the exceeding weight of the stones falling down did break into the vault and let in the fire, and they could not come near to save the books. The Library, also, of *Sion-College* was burnt, and most of the Libraries of Ministers, conformable and non-conformable, in the city; with the Libraries of many non con-

¹ *R.B.*, III, 14, 15.

formists of the country which had been lately brought up to the city. I saw the half-burnt leaves of books near my dwelling at *Acton*, six miles from *London*, but others found them near *Windsor*, almost twenty miles distant'.¹ It is not strange that Baxter, in the Puritan way, ascribes the calamities of the Plague and the Fire to the wrath of God. They were a judgment on the nation's profanity, perjury,² and general wickedness. But why did judgment fall chiefly on London? Why did she receive double for all her sins, while the rest of the land was, by comparison, let off? Why, in particular, was the city, within the walls, destroyed while the Westminster suburbs (towards the Court) escaped? This point was thrust upon him by something which passed between him and 'one Mr Caril, a gentleman of a great estate in Sussex', and a very respectable Papist. About a fortnight before the Fire he sent a paper to Baxter in which he said that if the Pope was to blame for licensing whore houses in Rome, it should be realized that the case of London was worse. There were whole streets in Westminster of such houses whose licensees 'have not so much as the rebuke of any penalty; but, when they die', are buried as good Christians. Baxter answered that, as to Westminster, he could not speak; but as to the city, within the walls, he could say that he 'did not believe that there was in all the world such a City for Piety, Sobriety and Temperance'. Yet the city was taken and the suburbs left. How did Baxter explain? He is silent.

But he notes how the city again benefited by the Ministers—as many of them, in or near London, who were still at liberty) when they saw 'the Churches burnt and the parish Minister gone',³ 'were mo re resolved than ever to preach till they were imprisoned'. They kept 'their meetings very openly and prepared large rooms, and some of them plain chapels, with pulpits, seats and galleries for the reception of as many as could come'.

¹ The wind blew strongly from the East.

² Curiously, the 'Perjury' lay in the public disavowing of the solemn League and Covenant. He had objected to the imposition of it—though not till he had been led to take it himself; but to forswear it when taken, and compel every city or Corporation to forswear, was the height of impiety.

³ This will mean not that they had gone away a second time but that they had not yet come back.

The Independents were as active as the Presbyterians. 'Dr Owen (who had before kept far off) and Mr Philip Nye and Dr Thomas Goodwin, who were their Leaders, now came to the City'. And Baxter does not omit to mention that there were parish Clergy also who did their part. For it so 'fell out that the parish Churches that were left standing had the best and ablest of the Conformists in them, especially Dr Stillingfleet, Dr Tillotson, Mr White, Dr Outram, Dr Patrick, Mr Gifford, Dr Whichcot, Dr Horton, Mr Nest, etc.'. Most of these were moderate men, so that they drew the moderate sort of citizens, who were also attracted by the moderate Nonconformists. They heard the one or the other indifferently; and, in this way, came to a better mutual understanding. There were, however, still many who would not go near one who preached in a conventicle and others who would not go near one who used the common Prayer!¹ But the result was further discussion, for and against, of liberty and comprehension. Baxter connects this, at the same time, with the fall of Clarendon—an event which drew out his mature opinion of that specious friend.² For the Duke of Buckingham who, with Sir Orlando Bridgman, came into chief favour after Clarendon, 'showed himself openly for toleration or liberty for all parties';³ and his attitude, supposed to be the king's, widened the connivance at Nonconformist meetings. From the Metropolis it spread to the country where 'ministers were so much encouraged by the boldness and liberty of those at *London* that they did the like in most parts of England; and crowds of the most religiously inclined people were their hearers'.⁴

Along with this general drift there was a specific motion initiated by the Lord Keeper Bridgman. Baxter was made aware of it by Dr Manton,⁵ and it failed through no lack of keenness on his part. The date was early in January 1661. Baxter at once went to London and met Sir John Baber⁶ (1625–1704), the Lord Keeper's intermediary, who told him that his

1 *R.B.*, III, 19. 2 *Ibid.*, 20. 3 *Ibid.*, 22. 4 *Ibid.*, 22.

5 *Ibid.*, 23

6 Baber, Physician to Charles II, was recommended to the King by Manton. He was knighted in March 1660.

Chief 'had certain proposals to offer us and that many great courtiers were our friends in the business; but that, to speak plainly, if we would carry it we must make use of such as were for a toleration of *Papists* also'. In the end, it was this last point that wrecked the business, so far as Baxter himself was concerned. Not only on this occasion, but on other similar occasions, he drew back from the offered terms because, in every case, there was 'some crevice or countenance' for opening the door to moderate Papists. He drew back, and drew his friends with him. It seems very narrow, but his defence must be weighed in full view of the circumstances. If the Presbyterians had been the means, for the sake of their own convenience, of letting in the Papists, the first to turn upon them would have been the Prelatists, to say nothing of the Independents; and the popular fury would have been intense. This, however, was not his main reason. Had he believed in liberty for the Papists he would have braved public opinion; but he did not believe in it. Though against any 'renewed pressure or severities', he was equally against a legal sanction of their religion. At any rate, 'if they must have it, let them petition for it themselves'.¹ With such a foreseen rock ahead, there could be no good hope of a happy issue to the conferences which took place—though nothing was *said* about the Papists. The first was between the Lord Keeper on the one side, and Baxter and Dr Manton on the other. At this, the former made it clear that, while he 'had somewhat to offer' to the Presbyterians for their comprehension, he could not discuss a 'scheme, which the latter were prepared to bring forward, for the comprehension of 'Independents and all sound Christians', as well. For these there could be 'only a Toleration'. A few days later, he sent them his proposals; and, when they suggested that these were hardly fit for debate with a layman, he let himself be represented by 'two learned and peaceable divines', of his own nomination. The two were Dr Wilkins (afterwards Bishop of Chester) who turned out to be 'the author of the proposals and of the whole business'; and his Chaplain Mr Burton. He consented, also, to let Dr Bates be added to Baxter and Manton. When the five met, the three tendered some proposals of their

¹ *R.B.*, III, 36.

own which the two 'presently rejected'.¹ Thereupon they tendered certain alterations of the Wilkins scheme, which the Doctor declined, not so much because they asked for more than he himself would grant as because they were more than would pass with the Parliament. In a letter written two years later (February 25, 1669-70)² Baxter says—'The hardest knot that we found before us was somewhat proposed like a re-ordination. And our reasons against that nullity of the silenced ministers ordination being many and great (which were given in) and satisfying the Reverend person (Dr Wilkins) whom we were to treat with, we were constrained (not to choose, but) to accept of such terms as might satisfy both parties, without contradicting the judgment of either, so as to put them upon supposed sin'. This seems to point to a compromise on the question, though there is no clear trace of compromise in the 'reasons' against re-ordination which Baxter afterwards printed,³ unless it can be detected in the following—'Note, That by ordination, we mean the solemn separation of a person from the number of the laity to the sacred ministry in general, and not the designation, appointment, or determination of him to this or that particular flock or church,⁴ nor yet a mere ecclesiastical confirmation of his former ordination, in a doubted case;⁵ nor yet the magistrates' licence to exercise the sacred ministry in his dominions: all which we believe on just occasion may be frequently given and received, and we thereby profess to consent to no more'.⁶ Among the Wilkins proposals were some terms of Indulgence for those not willing to be comprehended—e.g. the Independents. Baxter passed these by as no part of his present concern. He had no wish to leave the Independents out in the cold; but thought that the urging of their claims just then would do more harm than good. This in

1 See a copy of them in *R.B.*, III, 24. In the Baxter MSS. there is an imperfect page of rough notes partly identical with the above and dated Saturday, Jan. 18, 1667-8. This might be the date of the first meeting.

2 Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, f. 108^{ab}.

3 *R.B.*, III, 38.

4 Like the Independents.

5 To which Baxter and his friends had no objection?

6 In the letter, just quoted, Baxter, in answer to his correspondent's request for the Papers reporting the Conferences, says they were lost among his rude Papers at Acton. But he found and printed them in *R.B.*, III, 24-35.

effect was what he wrote to Dr Owen; and, if we may trust Dr Manton (letter to Baxter of September 26, 1668),¹ the event proved him right. When Parliament met in February one of its first acts was to censure any proposals for comprehension and indulgence which might be on foot. But (says Manton) 'I was told by sundry persons of divers qualities (upon my return from the country) that the comprehension thought of by some, and endeavoured by our friends in Court, was wholly frustrated by Dr Owen's proposal of a toleration which was entertained and carried on by other persons; and those opposite to them who had of their own inclination interested themselves in the business of comprehension for our sakes'. Manton's sharp comments on Owen's action having been reported to him, he gave Manton and Dr Annesly a visit; disavowed what was reported of him; and 'dropped a motion' that a meeting of eight persons only—representatives of the Independents and Presbyterians—should be held; and a fresh start be made. Manton waived this motion; but agreed (unwarily) to a mixed meeting of ten, for a general discussion, of whom Baxter should be one. 'Meet I will not—unless you make one and bring Mr Corbet whom I nominated in the room of Mr Jenkyns'. 'Sir, give your resolution and answer as God shall direct you, but I desire that it may be sent as speedily as may be, that I may disappoint the meeting in time, if your answer be negative. The day is on Thursday next at Dr Jacomb's chamber'. Baxter's answer is not extant, but I think Dr Manton had to 'disappoint' the meeting. And anything proposed by Buckingham or Bridgman or others was dependent on the will of Parliament which met on February 7, 1667–8; and at once not only voted that no man should bring in any motion or act for comprehension or toleration; but, also, on the same day resolved that His Majesty be humbly desired to issue his Proclamation to enforce obedience to the Laws in force concerning Religion and Church-government as it is now established according to the Act of Nonconformity. On March 4 it repeated the desire in a somewhat stronger form, and on April 23 introduced a Bill 'for continuance of a former act to prevent and suppress seditious conventicles'. This was the first draft of the second Conventicle

¹ Baxter MSS., ii, f. 273^b.

Act. In the Lords it was dropped and was not taken up again till October 1669, nor finally passed till May 1670. The delay was due to repeated adjournments of Parliament; and it meant, at least, some degree of respite to the Nonconformists. Yet it was during this period that Baxter suffered his first imprisonment. The occasion arose out of his Sunday meetings. He was careful to limit these, as to numbers and character, by what he took to be the meaning of the Act, until it expired.¹ Then, he opened his house to all comers; and, of course, there was a crowd. He says himself 'that almost all the Town and Parish came, besides abundance from Branford (Brentford) and the neighbouring Parishes'; and, although he never preached during the time of the Public exercise² or stayed away from that exercise, he was sure to be complained of. The curate, 'a weak, dull young man that spent most of his time in ale-houses, and read a few dry sentences to the People but once a day', was sure to complain of him if nobody else did. But somebody else, of much higher standing than the curate, did so; and to the King himself. This was Baxter's next neighbour, Colonel Phillips, a courtier of the Bed-chamber. For the moment, the King seemed unconcerned. He put the matter by. Indeed, he was just (September 1665) toying with the Nonconformists, or at least with the Presbyterians. He invited some of their leaders to meet him privately at the Lord Arlington's lodgings and to present him with an address of thanks for 'the clemency of his Majesty's Government'; and he promised to do his utmost to get them 'comprehended within the Public establishment'. But he expressed a wish that they would be more circumspect. Their meetings were too numerous and too large. There was Mr Baxter, e.g. (a person for whose worth and learning he had great respect), why was he drawing all the country round about to him? Surely he might be less inconsiderate of the law and public opinion?

Dr Manton, who spoke for the rest, apologized for Baxter's conduct and his absence—as well as he could; and then sent him a report of the interview. If, however, he expected his

¹ At the end of October 1668.

² He preached 'after the morning exercise.' *R.B.*, III, 46.

friend to take it as a warning he miscalculated. Baxter had not approved of the address; and he gave no heed to the warning. There was no law against him; there was an open door; there were many converts, and in the Parish there were few adversaries—he knew not of three.¹ So he went on his way through the winter and spring. Then matters were brought to a head by the indiscretion of a dear friend—Rev John Reynolds, of Wolverhampton, once Vicar there, but ejected in 1662. It so happened that Dr Rive, Rector of Acton, was also Dean of Wolverhampton.² Rive was not often in residence at Acton; and, when he was, seemed quite friendly. It pleased him that Baxter came to church, and brought others with him. But he was jealous, all the same. He could not bear the sight of people crowding into the house over the way, and sometimes, when they followed Baxter to church ‘he would fall upon them with groundless reproaches, as if he had done it purposely to drive them away, and yet thought that my preaching to them, because it was in a house, did all the mischief. . . .’³

It needed but a spark, therefore, to make him explode; and Mr Reynolds unwittingly applied the spark. In conference with a local apothecary named Bracegirdle he let himself be provoked to say that the Nonconformists were not so contemptible for number and quality as he made them; that most of the people were of their mind; that Cromwell, though an usurper, had kept up England against the Dutch, etc., and that he marvelled at his being so hot against private meetings, when at Acton the Dean suffered them at the next door.⁴ This was more than enough. Bracegirdle wrote an aggravated account of the affair to the Dean; the Dean hastened with it to the King; the King had Mr Reynolds arrested; and bade the Dean go to the Bishop of London, and so get the Acton meeting suppressed. Without delay this was done by two Brentford Justices, the one Thomas Ross (a Scot and Library-keeper at Westminster), and the other J. Phillips (a steward of the Archbishop of Canterbury). In the same breath they sent a

¹ *R.B.*, III, 46.

² He was, too, Dean of Windsor, Parson of Hastley and Chaplain in Ordinary to the King. ³ *R.B.*, III, 46. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

warrant to the Constable to apprehend Baxter and bring him before them to Brentford.¹ This was on Wednesday, June 9, 1669. When he appeared on the 11th they called no witnesses, and shut out all persons from the room. Then they tendered him the Oxford Oath.

His refusal, for reasons to which they would not listen,² was followed not by the optional and milder penalty of £40 but by instant committal to the New Prison in Clerkenwell, where the Keeper was to keep him safely for six months without bail or mainprize.³ Next day, Saturday, he went away, having refused to promise not to preach on Sunday, if allowed to stay at home till Monday. 'The whole town of Acton', says Baxter, 'were greatly exasperated against the Dean when I was going to prison, in so much as ever since they abhor him as a selfish Persecutor'; but Baxter himself cherished no malice, and spared time to call upon him 'to endeavour that they part in Love.' His forgiving spirit had its effect: for the Dean at least appeared to be sorry; swore it was none of his doing; and offered him any service of his which he desired. 'I told him I desired nothing of him but to do his people good, and to guide them faithfully, as might tend to their salvation, and his own; and so we parted'.⁴ He probably arrived at Clerkenwell on Saturday the 12th, since he would not travel on Sunday; and on Monday he dated, if he did not actually write, the Preface to the second part of his book 'the character of a sound confirmed Christian—from my lodgings in New Prison, June 14, 1669.' On his way he called on his friend Sergeant Fountain 'to take his advice',⁵ and was counselled to sue for a *Habeas Corpus*, not in the usual court, however (the King's Bench), nor yet in the Exchequer but at the Common-Pleas. This he decided to do—though others urged him to petition the King and engage his friends at Court to plead for him. In holding off from the King and his courtly friends he acted wisely: for he had fallen out of favour with the former; and, therefore, with the latter. At any rate, they professed themselves help-

1 Seat of the District County Court.

2 See a full statement of his case, *R.B.*, III, 56–8.

3 The warrant is printed in *R.B.*, III, 49,

4 *Ibid.*, III, 50. 5 *Ibid.*, 50.

less;¹ whereas his suit for a *Habeas Corpus* at length succeeded because it was found to be sustained by faults in the Mittimus, or warrant.² Meanwhile, his situation was not very painful. For one thing he became aware that he had many sympathisers. Even ‘the moderate honest part of the Episcopal clergy were much offended’; and said, ‘I was chosen out designedly to make them all odious to the people’.³ For another, when he appeared before the Judges they treated him with marked respect—not suffering him to stand at the Bar but calling him up to the Table; and not sending him, as was usual, to the Fleet, but back to the New Prison. Then, too, his life in Prison was little more than an easy restraint. It had drawbacks, of course: the extreme heat of the summer, e.g. distressed him; his chamber was over the gate, which was knocked and opened with noise of prisoners just under him almost every night, so that he had little hope of sleeping but by day; the stream of daily visitors put him out of hope of studying or doing anything but entertain them; and he had neither leave at any time to go out of doors, much less to Church on the Lord’s day, nor on that day might he have any come to him.

On the other hand, he had an honest jailer, who showed him all the kindness he could; he had a large room and the liberty of walking in a fair garden; he had his own best bed brought thither by his wife who, also, brought so many necessaries that they kept house as contentedly and comfortably as at home, though in a narrower room; and he had the sight of more of his friends in a day than he had at home in half a year.⁴

To some of these friends who tried to make him feel like a martyr he went so far as to say: ‘If I had been to take lodgings at *London* for six months, and had not known that this was a prison, and had knocked at the door and asked for rooms, I should as soon have taken this which I was put into as most in Town (save only for the interruption of my sleep).’⁵ His dower of inward happiness sustained him—much and constantly—helped by his wife ‘who was never so cheerful a companion to me as in prison’.⁶ ‘I think she had scarce ever a

¹ Even the Earl of Lauderdale who would have been forwardest had he known the king’s mind to be otherwise, said nothing. *R.B.*, III, 51.

² *R.B.*, III, 59. ³ *Ibid.*, 51. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 51. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 58. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

pleasanter time in her life than while she was with me there'.¹ It was no use, therefore, for certain brethren of the sourer sort to sit with him and bemoan his condition, and move him to self-pity, or a fierce resentment. No, said he, 'the loss of one Grain of Love were worse than a long imprisonment'; and 'it much more concerns us to be sure that we deserve not suffering than to be delivered from it'. And to some who told him that they hoped this would make him stand a little further from the Prelates than he had done, his reply was nobly Christian. 'I wonder that you should think that a Prison can change my Judgment. I rather think now it is my duty to set a stricter watch upon my passions lest they should pervert my judgment and carry me into extremes, in opposition to my afflictors. If passion make me lose my love or my religion the loss will be my own. And truth does not change because I am in a Jail'.² In his second and last appearance before the Court the feeling of its crowded audience for Baxter was so manifest that the Lord Chief Justice Vaughan spoke a word of warning. Mr Baxter, he understood, was a man of great learning, and of a good life, but he was not released on that account, nor because there was no case against Conventicles. If they went away with that notion they were mistaken and might mislead others. He was released simply on the technical point that those who made the *Mittimus* did not know how to make it—a plain hint that Baxter had not really won his cause and was not out of danger. This fact was soon brought home to him. The two exasperated Justices, Ross and Phillips, 'made a new *Mittimus* by Counsel,' and put it into the hands of a London officer to bring him, not to Clerkenwell, but among 'the thieves and murderers, to the common jail at Newgate, which was since the Fire, the most noisome place (except the Tower Dungeon) of any Prison in the Land'.³ It was urgent, therefore, that he should find some place of residence five miles from Acton or London at once; and, after much trouble, such a place was found at Totteridge near Barnet. The time, as near as one can reckon, was October 1669. But this was not the month of his release. In a letter⁴ dated February 3, 1669/70, he wrote from

¹ B., 51. ² R.B., III, 59—turned into *oratio directa*.

³ R.B., III, 60. ⁴ Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, if. 237^{ab}—9^a

Totteridge ‘I am banished these ten years, almost, from my library *and these eight months since I came out of prison* from the few books I had by me, and from the converse of learned men into an obscure corner’; and so, if the words ‘eight months’ may be taken literally, we arrive at the rather surprising fact that his imprisonment did not last more than two or three weeks. Where was he in the interval? The postscript of this letter suggests the answer: Direct your letters to Henry Ashurst, Esq., at the Golden Key in Aldersgate Street. Nothing more likely than that this best of his London friends—dear to Mrs Baxter as well as to himself—should have welcomed them to the temporary shelter of his home. Mr Thomas Foley might have been glad to do so if he had been in Town but he was then at Witley, his country house in Worcestershire. Certainly Baxter at least, did not go back to Acton. The risk of arrest would have been too great.

NOTE

Baxter’s note on the kindness of friends in connection with his trial deserves quotation:

‘gratitude commandeth me to tell the world who were my Benefactors in my Imprisonment and Calumny as much obligeth me, because it is said among some that I was enriched by it: Serjeant *Fountain*’s general counsel ruled me. Mr *Wallop* and Mr *Offley* sent me their Counsel and would take nothing. Of four Serjeants that pleaded my Cause, two of them, Serjeant *Windham* (afterwards Baron of the Exchequer) and Serjeant *Sise* would take nothing. Sir John *Bernard* (a Person that I never saw but once) sent me no less than Twenty Pieces; and the Countess of *Exeter* Ten Pounds, and Alderman *Bard*, Five; and I received no more. But I confess more was offered me, which I refused; and more would have been, but that they knew I needed it not. And this much defrayed my Law and Prison Charges’. *R.B.*, III, 60.

CHAPTER 2 (1670–1673)
TOTTERIDGE

IT was at first no house but a few mean rooms to which the Baxters removed—apparently unfurnished: since Mrs Baxter is said to have transferred to them as many of ‘her goods as were movable’, the rest being left with his mother-in-law and the servants at Acton till some convenient arrangement could be made about the great house there, which he had still on his hands. The inconvenience of the rooms; the access of a hard winter and bad health, made their situation distressing. But Mrs Baxter, as usual, rose to the occasion. ‘At Totteridge, the first year, few poor people are put to the hardness that she was put to. We could have no house, but part of a poor farmer’s where the chimneys so extremely smoked as greatly annoyed her health; for it was a very hard winter, and the coal smoke so filled the room, that we all sat in, that it was as a cloud, and we were suffocated with the stink. And she had ever a great straightness of the lungs that could not bear smoke and closeness. This was the greatest bodily suffering that her outward condition put her to, which was increased by my continual pain there.’¹ But she remained cheerful, despite this addition to her chronic prostrating headache; and so did he. When we read his summary of the fleshly ills which tormented him at this time, as they had done more or less for eight or ten years past, it is natural to feel some disgust at his want of taste; and to charge him with sheer morbidity. But there is nothing to prove that he was really morbid. In other words, there is no evidence that he dwelt upon his ills in thought, or talk. And his motive for reciting them is plainly stated. It was, as in Paul’s case, a desire to magnify the grace of God which had demonstrated its strength in his weakness. ‘Through God’s mercy *I was never one hour melancholy*,² and, not many hours in a week, disabled utterly from my work, save that I lost time in the morning for

¹ B., p. 52. ² R.B., III, 60. Italics mine.

want of being able to rise early.' He says that not to mention this and record his thanks and praise, would leave him inexcusable. But though his mood of inward happiness found its mainspring in God, it owed some increase to human tributaries; and the chief of these was his wife. He had known her and learnt to love her when she was a woman greatly given to fears; and, perhaps, was scarcely prepared for the bright change which seems to have been wrought by her marriage. Her melancholy vanished. Her native gaiety escaped as from a prison-house. She learnt the secret, and—save for occasional misgivings—never afterwards lost it, of the words so often on her husband's lips that 'the joy of the Lord is your strength.' Thus they could help each other to 'songs in the night'. But there was in her a charm for others which he lacked. It won the people at Acton, who 'greatly esteemed and loved her'. Many of them were 'accounted worldly and ignorant persons', but to please her they came to hear her husband preach in the house, and what he calls 'her winning conversation' (i.e. behaviour) drew them to goodness more than his powerful sermons. It was due, also, mainly to their love for her that when, at a later time,¹ they heard that he again wanted a house, they unanimously subscribed a request to him to return to his old house with them, and offered to pay the rent. Her charm, I think, had its root in her quick sympathy with the individual. She was interested not in mankind, but in men and women: every man or woman she came across—irrespective of rank: each of her maidservants, for instance; or the charwoman of the meeting-house in St. James's; or the poor farmer's wife and her son at Totteridge. The son, perhaps, was 'a lad o' pairts', or at least one who might do well if he had a chance; but in so straitened and isolated a home, he had none. So Mrs Baxter, having talked the matter over with the anxious mother, opened the way for him. She got him apprenticed to some trade; paid the necessary charges; kept an eye upon him; and 'now (writes Baxter in 1681) he liveth well'. It would be very unfair to say that Baxter had no individual sympathy. Many cases to the contrary could be cited. But it is not unfair to say that individual

¹ *B.*, 50, 51. Probably after March 1672 when the Indulgence set them on thoughts of removal.

sympathy was not his strong point, as it was his wife's. His mind worked too much by categories, of which Humanity was one; and, in the logical treatment of Humanity from admitted premises, he was apt to overlook the peculiar claims and characteristics of those single souls with whom his daily life brought him into contact. It was a defect which cost him dear, alike in his handling of doctrine and of men.

They lodged with the farmer until June 23, 1670, by which time Baxter's mother-in-law (aged 80) and the others from Acton had joined them.¹ On that date they moved into a house of their own—more convenient but requiring 'so great alterations and amendment' as 'took up much time and labour' on his wife's part. He himself, it would seem, was useless in such matters. Then 'to her great comfort she got Mr Corbet and his wife to dwell with us'. Mr Corbet,² at least, was an old friend whom Baxter met for the first time in July 1642, during his short visit to Gloucester where Corbet was minister; 'a man of extraordinary judgment, stayedness, moderation, peaceable Principles and blameless life; a solid Preacher well known by his writings.' After the siege of Gloucester (1643), of which he wrote the history, he ministered at Bridgwater, Chichester and Bramshot in Hampshire—the living (of £200 per annum³) which he gave up in 1662. For a time after his ejection 'he lived peaceably in London⁴ without gathering an assembly for public preaching'; but the Five Mile Act drove him into the country; and he had come to dwell with an Alderman Webb of Totteridge before the Baxters arrived. Mrs Corbet was a daughter of Dr William Twiss (prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly) and did honour to her birth. She and Mrs Baxter seem to have fallen in love with each other at once; while to the men this renewal of acquaintance after so many eventful years, was a deep delight. The proposal to join the Baxters in their new home, when it came from Mrs Baxter, was accepted 'with great love'; and issued in an experience of the truest fellowship. Speaking for himself Baxter says: 'In all the time he was with me I remember not that ever we differed once in any point of

¹ *R.B.*, III, 75. ² 1620–80. See *D.N.B.*

³ Nearly equal to £1,000 now.

⁴ With Dr. Micklethwaite, like Baxter before him.

doctrine, worship or government, ecclesiastical or civil, or that ever we had one displeasing word.’ As to his wife, she found Mrs Corbet’s society so congenial that, not long after her husband’s death (which took place on December 26, 1680) she persuaded her to live with her again; and this she did till Mrs Baxter’s own death in the following June. Mrs Corbet was one of the two or three who saw her pass away. The Corbets went back to Chichester in 1672, and spent some stormy years there. Our last glimpse of *him* is painful. ‘Having endured at Chichester many years’ torment of the Stone he came up to London to be cut and died before the operation’. Our last glimpse of *her* is in a letter to Baxter dated November 1, 1685, and addressed to him at his lodging in Southwark:¹

‘DEAR SIR,

‘I very thankfully received your most welcome letter. . . a choice mercy still to be in your thoughts, and have a share in your remembrances. I often think, if it were now with me as it was in times past, how glad I should be of one of those hours with you, as formerly I passed over in silence. . . . I now hear from my good friend Mrs Rand how wonderfully God doth uphold you under the present circumstances. The relation she gave me of it was a great comfort to me and much refreshed me.

‘Your very thankful and much obliged friend and servant,

‘FRANCES CORBET’.

Baxter mentions no other neighbour of his at Totteridge, except one. This was Rev John Faldo (1633–90), an Independent of considerable ability who, in face of the law, had gathered a large congregation at Barnet, a mile off. We hear of him later as a vehement antagonist of the Quakers and particularly of William Penn. In this connection, he induced Baxter and twenty other Divines to back him up in a commendatory epistle to a second edition of his *Quakerism no Christianity* (1674).

Ten years later still (1684) he came out strongly for Dr Owen against Baxter on the subject of ‘Communion with Parish Churches’, and was more than suspected of being the author of several anonymous writings in which Owen was vindicated

¹ Baxter was a prisoner in his lodging. Baxter MSS. (Letters), iv, 13^a, 14^b.

and Baxter abused. Baxter wrote an answer to all his charges; and among others to this—that Baxter was ‘a Liar for saying that his congregation at Barnet worshipped many years without sacraments and without singing Psalms’. Faldo did not deny the bare fact, but argued that the congregation, while so doing, was not yet a Church as Baxter, in his innocence, had called it! The subterfuge is ridiculous and unworthy of notice, but for the flash of light on the two men and their relation to each other, which Baxter’s answer emits. Faldo never saw the answer: for Baxter suspended its publication under stress of more urgent affairs,¹ and it now lies with the Baxter MSS.²

Here is the interesting passage:

‘I lived at Totteridge Nr. Barnet about three years. I heard that Mr F. preached constantly many years to a very considerable congregation; and that few went to the public church in comparison of his hearers. I never heard, or thought, anything of him but well. Whilst I was glad of his success, he more than once told me that his congregation was composed of persons of several sorts, some Anabaptists, some Arminians of John Goodwin’s way, and that the Quakers were so busy with them that he had been put to many debates to persuade the people, and that they were *against “singing Psalms in the Congregation, and would not yet consent to it”*.³ I advised him to get Mr Foret’s and Mr Cotton’s books on that subject which had arguments very satisfactory; and persuaded them to peruse them. He told me that he had written, or was writing, some arguments for it himself; but all did not prevail with them. He desired me to come over and preach to them. I consented, and, understanding that there were many strangers besides his usual congregation” that were like to join with me, I caused them to sing a Psalm. The week following, I asked how Mr F.’s people took it, and was told that some of them made a mock of it. I never went more, but I heard Mr F. continued it ever after, seeing that *some* would join.’

Another episode of the Totteridge period brings on the scene, for a moment, the sinister figure of one whom contemporary

¹ *R.B.*, III, 199. ² *Treatises*, vii, ff. 236–9.

³ Italics mine. ⁴ Drawn by the announcement of his visit?

fame, with hardly a dissentient voice, has handed down as a monster of sensuality, cruelty and hypocrisy—the second Earl of Lauderdale. 'Tis passing strange that, of all men, the saintly Baxter should have declared himself the friend of such a man. He took no pains to hide his regard; and he acted with his eyes open. I have suggested elsewhere¹ that he refused, on the strength of his own experience (as himself an object of the grossest slanders), to believe a tenth of the reports which reached him about the Earl; that his letter of solemn admonition to the Earl in 1671 is proof that, so far as he was constrained to believe or fear what was wrong, he spoke out with fearless honesty; that Baxter could not forget the Lauderdale of the letters, in which he seemed so sincerely bent upon goodness, nor could bring himself to think it was all a sham; and that there were really elements of good in the Earl which, in Baxter's presence or under his direct influence, rose to the surface and revealed themselves—though too weak to hold up against the increasing power of evil habit. There can be no question that the Earl did become, to all appearances, a thoroughly rotten character. But is there ever a thoroughly rotten character? Is there not always some one who sees something to the contrary? And may we not count it a tribute to Baxter's spiritual insight that *he* saw something good in Lauderdale to the last?

In June 1670 the Earl heard that Baxter was about to conform,² and sent for him to London. He may be supposed to have foreseen that for Baxter conforming would not mean security, and still less advancement in the English Church; but he had a scheme for the Scottish Church into which Baxter might be fitted, with benefit to himself and credit to all concerned. He might be a Bishop, or Professor, or Parish Minister as he chose; and the glory of obtaining the support of such a man for the moderates or sober party, would fall on his patron and the King. In this way Lauderdale put the case to the King; and, receiving a free hand, sought the interview with Baxter. But he got only thanks and a number of reasons for asking to be excused. In July the Earl on his way to Scotland

¹ Letters of Lauderdale to Baxter transcribed and edited by the writer. *Bulletin* (July 1922) of 'John Ryland's Library.' ² *R.B.*, III, 75.

summoned Baxter to meet him at Barnet. There was not time for further talk. All he could do was to say 'no'; and hand into the coach a letter to explain why. 'He is too weak to stand a Scottish winter; he is writing a book (*Methodus Theologiæ*) which he must finish if possible, as it is all the service he can expect to do God and his Church, and he hardly hopes to live a year; he is not really wanted in Scotland, which has already enough men for the work who can do it better; he is just resettled in a new house after several costly removals; and, lastly, he dare not undertake to travel so far with his family and goods and books, especially as he feels sure that he would soon have to remove all back again. Thus he answered and here the affair ended; but the letter contains a passage which must be quoted. It tells us just what we want to know about his personal outlook in that June of 1670 when the second Conventicle Act, with clauses prompted by an eye upon his case,¹ was beginning its vindictive career.

'I am weary'—he writes—'of the noise of contentious Revilers, and have oft had thoughts to go into a foreign land, if I could find any where I might have a healthful air, and quietness, that I might but live—and die in peace. When I sit in a corner and meddle with nobody, and hope the World will forget I am alive, Court, City and Country is still filled with clamours against me, and when a preacher wanteth preferment, his way is to preach, and write a book against the Nonconformists and me by name: so that the *Menstrua*² of the Press (and Pulpits of some) is some bloody invectives against myself, as if my peace were inconsistent with the Kingdom's happiness; and never did my eyes read such impudent untruths in matter of fact as their writings contain; and they cry out for answer and reasons of my Nonconformity, while they know the law forbiddeth me to answer them unlicensed'. If it be said that Baxter took himself too seriously the answer is, that no one will say so who realizes what an incomparably big man he was in the eyes of all parties; and, if it be said that his language was exaggerated, the answer is, that the pamphlets and press of the time bear him out to the full. Hence it was no sign of panic, when (in view of his instant danger, if he ventured

¹ R.B., III, 74. ² The monthly (*mensis*) provision.

beyond a mile or two from home), he entreated the Earl to intercede (he does not say with whom) to the end that he might be heard speak for himself; that he might live quietly to follow his private study; that he might have the liberty, enjoyed by every beggar, to travel from town to town, or at least to London, now and then; and that, if he should be arrested and committed to Newgate, he might have the favour of a better prison where there would be room at any rate to read and write.

It brings home to us the bitter injustice which was then rampant when he goes on to add, with regard to such elementary human rights:

‘These I should take as very great favours, and acknowledge your Lordship my benefactor if you procure them’. But his Lordship had neither leisure nor power, nor (it is probable) much will to help.¹ The news from Scotland soon opened his eyes to that.

There was, in short, no present relief to be had from Noble, Prelate or Parliament. As to the King it remained to be seen.

2

CORRESPONDENTS

His chief comfort, next to that of God and his wife and the Corbets, lay in work; and he toiled unceasingly. But he owed something, also, to letters which he received, now and then, from outside friends. They must at least have eased his sense of loneliness. Some of these are among the Baxter MSS.; others are known only by Baxter’s answers. Very interesting are two of the latter to Rev John Woodbridge of Kenilworth (or Kenlurewoth), New England, a nephew of his old friend Rev Benjamin Woodbridge, minister of Newbury in Berkshire. He had written,² it seems, in a strain of excessive compliment, which led Baxter to begin his answer (dated Totteridge in Hertfordshire, February 3, 1669—70) in this way:

¹ It is irony of the keenest sort, though not meant, when, in a second letter of the same date, Baxter unfolds an easy plan for ending ‘the sinfulness and calamities of our divided and distracted condition’; and appeals to Lauderdale as perhaps the appointed ‘Instrument to bring it about through the King.’ *R.B.*, III, 77.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, ff. 237^{ab}–9^a.

‘WORTHY BROTHER,

‘The error of your over-valuing expressions of me I impute to your 3,000 miles distance: we all seem better to those that behold us afar off than to those in our family who are the witnesses of our faults’; and its last words are these:

‘If you write any more to me leave out your compliments’. But he deals kindly and carefully with his young correspondent’s four questions—as to terms of Church membership; the relation of the divine nature to the human; what will God do with ‘this earthen world’; and the sense of Genesis iii. One or two sentences may be quoted: ‘There are a thousand texts which no mortal man shall ever know the certain sense of (and yet not written in vain) because the words are capable of several meanings: but there is no necessary doctrine for faith, love or obedience which we may not be certain of as being plainly, if not frequently also, delivered. And, therefore, the ancient Christians made so much of the creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Decalogue—the summary of faith, desire and obedience—because it is not the sense of every text of Scripture but these essentials contained in the whole, which are of necessity to salvation’. In a postscript he says: ‘I never wrote to any that I remember in New England but Mr Elliott;¹ and I would fain know whether his method of councils be yet communicated and how it taketh’.

Mr Woodbridge in his reply sent a ‘free and full narrative’ of the state of New England and its affairs; and unveiled such an amount of dissension among the Churches as gave point to the question ‘what means is apt for the cure?’ Baxter’s ‘cure’, of course, was just a summary of his usual proposals—with wise advice as to their application in New England; and some sentences about the want of ‘calm’ in the old land. ‘Our sufferings raise our passions so high that instead of curing us, they make us mad’. In the close, he points to the report—which had crossed the Atlantic—of his own ‘Conformity’, as an example of the slanders engendered by party spirit. ‘My book called the *Cure of Church Divisions* was the occasion. I have sent it you that you may see my true conformity; and that you

¹ That is, Mr Eliot, the missionary—an Independent inclined to some form of Presbytery.

may know what the spirit of Separation here is and with what sort of people we have to do’.

His last words illustrate his continued interest in the growth of Harvard College: ‘I have directed to Mr Broadstreet at Boston,¹ as my gift to your university Library, Dr Castle’s Polyglot Lexicon, with the first of Mr Poole’s four volumes of the *Critics*. I had sent with them the Polyglot Bible but *that* I understand that my friend Mr Boyle had sent before. I shall, if God will that Mr Poole live to finish them, send the other three volumes of the *Critics*, or take care that they be sent, if I live so long; for Mr Davy, a merchant, hath promised them to me for the Library’.²

The mention of Mr Boyle, i.e. the Honourable Robert Boyle (1627–91), may remind us of a fact about Baxter which it is easy to overlook, viz: the comparative breadth of his intellectual sympathies. Mr Boyle had been on a personal visit to Baxter, and followed this up by a gift of his books. Baxter acknowledged these—and, no doubt, the accompanying letters in terms of warm gratitude and respect; addresses him as ‘Most dear and truly honourable Sir’; and speaks of the recreation he has often found in Boyle’s experimental philosophy and other such writings’. Nor has he any prick of conscience in thus diverting himself, as if it meant a waste of time. Nay, rather, ‘your pious meditations and reflections do call to me for greater reverence in the reading of them, and make me put off my hat as if I was in a Church’—they so magnify the Creator and expand the orbit of contemplation in his works. He dwells on this; and then concludes: ‘The sum is, though a contemplative life may be more predominant with some and an active life with others, yet there are none but the utterly impotent who are not obliged to use them both. But its due contemplation which fitteth both for action and fruition’. Apologizing for the ‘eruption’ of words into which he had been betrayed, he signs himself ‘Your very much obliged and esteeming servant, R.B.’³

¹ Simon Bradstreete acknowledges receipt of this and other books ‘by my Cousin John Woodbridge’—Andover, February 5, 167½. Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, ff. 18^a–19^b.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, if. 237^{ab}–9^a; if. 240^{ab}–1^a.

³ Baxter MSS. (Letters), i, if. 269^b–70^b

Boyle's answer has been preserved, and shows that the correspondence took place while Baxter was at Acton. It is undated but is endorsed 'to my Reverend and highly esteemed friend Mr Richard Baxter at his house in Acton', and opens thus:

'When I thought it my duty to present you those trifles of which you are pleased to take such obliging notice, I did not think that they should put you to the trouble of a long letter'. He goes on to say: 'You are too much a friend of contemplation, and too well versed in it, to be an enemy to that sort of learning that furnishes it with a very copious and diffused, as well as noble, object. And there are divers things that bespeak you to be none of those narrow-souled divines that, by too much suspecting Natural Philosophy, tempt many of its votaries to suspect Theology'. Boyle, the man of science whose science was an aid, not a hindrance, to his religious faith, hails Baxter as an ally; and ends with the expression of a desire that he would undertake a work in which 'meditations upon the most usual occurrences' of nature might be used to widen and elevate the knowledge of God. He cannot do it himself, but 'I should think a design were excellently well lodged, if you would think fit to take it into your hands'.¹

Boyle was twelve years younger than Baxter and died three weeks after him (December 30, 1691). Another man, who was twenty-one years younger and died eleven years before him, Joseph Glanvil² (1636–80) attached himself to Baxter with all the ardour of a young hero-worshipper. While yet an undergraduate at Oxford he travelled to Kidderminster to hear him preach and to obtain a personal interview (which somehow did not come off).³ A man of open mind and a lover of science like Boyle, he, too, was drawn to Baxter by what may be called (in the best sense) his modernism. In his first extant letter to Baxter we find him saying—'You have taught me to think honourably of my Maker and to admit no suspicions contrary

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, f. 287^{ab}. It appears that Baxter had suggested this, for Boyle to do, and that Boyle had thought of it as something desirable 'before I last waited on you'—implying more than one visit.

² It is thus Glanvil himself spells the name.

³ This was about 1658—see *A True Defence of the Meer Nonconformists*, p. 181.

to the infinite fecundity of his goodness. From you I first learnt not to dote upon men's opinions, but to indulge free and impartial inquiry, and to own truth under any name and in whose hands so ever I find it'. The opening sentences of the same letter are these: 'As nothing but your virtues gave birth to my respect, so nothing but the loss of them can lessen it; which (as) I know it is impossible, I am secure I shall carry the honour I have for you to my grave. No clouds from without can darken you in my esteem; but I can own worth that the times frown upon, and I profess I affect you no less ardently than if you were a Metropolitan, not to tell you how much more; nor do I expect any other return of my affection but the satisfaction of loving you'.¹ It was natural in such a case, that the young man should hotly resent unfair attacks upon his hero. The letter just quoted from appears to have been written on August 4, 1661,² just when the 'clouds from without' were settling down on Baxter, and in February of the next year³ he wrote another, called forth by Baxter's answer to Morley the Bishop of Worcester's letter against him—a public letter which greatly prejudiced, and was meant to prejudice him in the public eye. Here the young clergyman (for he was by now Rector of Wimbish, Essex, and Vicar of Frome Selwood, Somerset) calls Morley 'your fierce and violent accuser', 'Your Right Reverend Libeller', 'whom you have treated in a spirit of Christian meekness; and only wiped off the dirt he cast in your face without throwing any in his'. He urges him, therefore, to print the answer at once—with only some verbal alteration, and within less compass. Timid friends may try to dissuade him, but he must not yield to them. 'Lies will grow bold if they meet with no rub of contradiction'. A friend of his own—with whom Baxter is the one person on earth that hath most of his esteem and affections—is eager to write a defence of him, but has stayed his hand on hearing of Baxter's purpose to publish his own defence. Baxter did not publish his MS.

¹ He begs Baxter not to consider this the effusive strain of mere invention.

² An inference from the fact that it enclosed the MS. of *Lux Orientalis*, or, 'a discourse on the pre-existence of souls,' which first came out in 1662.

³ The year is fixed by the fact that the letter is addressed to Baxter at Dr Micklethwaite's house; and so, before his marriage.

after all. It slumbers in Dr Williams's Library;¹ and is not likely to be aroused from its sleep. Glanvil was one of the very few friends—perhaps the only one—who had a sight of it; and nothing could attest more clearly Baxter's confidence in him.² On his side, Glanvil put no less confidence in Baxter. With his first letter he enclosed the MS. of his essay on the Pre-existence of souls called *Lux Orientalis*. He had not divulged the authorship to anyone else; and divulges it to him because he wants, and is sure to get, candid criticism which, though probably severe, is sure not to be censorious. Baxter's criticism was conveyed in a letter which miscarried—much to Glanvil's annoyance. 'I am sorry that your harsh censures, as you call them, never came to my hands; for I would gladly know the worst of myself, especially from a person whose reproofs would be more grateful to me than most men's applauses'. He cannot conceive of Baxter being unjust or passionate. To think so 'would be to find a flaw in the fairest idea of my thoughts'. What Baxter thought of his doctrine must have become known to him; and, since it was unfavourable, he proceeds to defend a belief in 'pre-existence' as one of the most ancient opinions in the world—sustained by the Oracles, the Chaldean Theology, the Christian Platonists, Proclus, the early Christians; and if not taught in the Scriptures yet not forbidden. The silence of Scripture is no proof against it. Indeed, on that standing 'I think more of the theory of the Christian world will be out of doors'. After this the curtain drops for several years—though letters now lost may have passed between them. Then, on November 18, 1670, Baxter wrote to Glanvil, 'Rector of Bath in Somersetshire', which had been his home since 1666. His immediate object was to obtain an exact narrative of the story of the Mompesson Demon of Tedworth. Glanvil had given currency to it in a letter to Dr More, and Baxter was one of the many who gave it implicit credence. But now it is much questioned (says

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vi, ff. 206^{ab}–45^{ab}, 1st Part of Defence; 257^{ab}–77^a, 2nd Part of Defence. On 277^b is a note—'Since the writing of this a Law is made (the Conventicle Act?) that not above four, being not of a family, shall meet on pretence of religious exercises, etc.—of which I have nothing here to say to man but shall—'

² *R.B.*, II, 378.

Baxter), and there are Sadducees of the Inns of Court who declare that Mr Mompesson himself has confessed that ‘it was all his own juggling, done only that he might be taken notice of’. Will Glanvil look into the matter and put such sceptics to shame? Baxter’s own faith never wavered. Twenty years later he endorsed the story in his *Historical Discourse of Apparitions and Witches*,¹ and certified Joseph Glanvil as a man whom he knew to be ‘far enough from fanatic credulity’.

Such a survival of superstition among the most enlightened men of the age—Baxter, Glanvil, More, Cudworth, Sir Matthew Hale, Boyle, etc.—needs to be studied in relation to its background of philosophic Materialism; and may then be seen to have a value of its own as a plea, however crude, for the spiritual.

It would be pleasant to make this the last word. But truth requires it to be said that some ten years later something came to light which wounded Baxter deeply. He calls it the ‘Rag’ of a letter written by Glanvil just before his death (1680) and calculated to stir up the authorities to a more vigorous use of force against the Dissenters. He quotes his words to the effect that the ‘Sword is the Church’s strength and government’; and that mere ‘words, paper-arguments, and excommunications’ avail nothing. For ‘the greatest part of those that now scatter and run about’ (i.e. the Dissenters) ‘do it out of humour or fancy or faction or interest or animosity or desire of being counted godly, not really out of conscience and conviction of duty; and these the penalties, duly exacted, would bring back’. Baxter was at a loss to account for so strange an abandonment of his friend’s former tolerance, save on the supposition that recent promotions in the Church had turned his head. But to demonstrate that he had once thought very differently of at least one of the Dissenters he quotes in full the first letter which Glanvil wrote to him (dated September 3, ’61)—a letter marked like those already noticed, by excessive praise,² only more so, and signed—‘Most excellent Sir one of the meanest, though most sincere, of your affectionate lovers and admirers’.

¹ Date of Preface, July 20, 1691.

² Baxter calls its praises ‘monstrous.’ They are those of unrestrained enthusiasm, but manifestly sincere.

Baxter quotes this to show not Glanvil's insincerity, but his inconsistency; and to ask, if 'a man so lately changed from himself . . . was much wiser at last than when he wrote it'.¹ Glanvil was an Oxford man, but deserves to be regarded as a lesser light of the Cambridge school, especially through his esteem for Henry More; and his affinity with Baxter suggests that the latter and the Cambridge men were not far apart. The suggestion may seem so unlikely as to be startling; but there are other facts (as we shall see) which favour it; and one is the correspondence during the Totteridge period, between Baxter and Edward Fowler,² Rector of Northil, six miles S.E. of Bedford. One morning in the summer of 1671 Baxter received an anonymous letter calling his attention to a book just published under the title *Holiness the Design of Christianity*, denouncing it as advocating 'the meer morality of a Heathen'; and directly leading 'to obscure or drown the whole doctrine of our Justification'. Baxter, said the writer, was partly responsible for the book inasmuch as it grew out of opinions which his writings had spread abroad. If, then, he admitted that the teaching of the book was a mischievous perversion of his own, he would be doubly guilty if he did not publicly write against it. But instead of this, Baxter forthwith wrote and published a few sheets in its support. Viewed with reference to its end—to check Antinomianism—it was (said Baxter) an excellent book, and most necessary. Viewed with reference, also, to some of its particular views—e.g. the essential nobleness of human nature, the derivation of all truth and goodness from Christ the Eternal Word and Light of the World, the certainty of salvation for all the true and good even them that know him not—Baxter at least felt no disagreement. No wonder, therefore, that as soon as Baxter's brochure came into Fowler's hand it moved him to a grateful acknowledgment. He wrote to him at Totteridge on September 29, 1671, expressing appreciation of the more forceful way in which Baxter had stated his own argument; and his keen impatience with the unknown impertinent person (not to give him a worse epithet) who had challenged Baxter to clear his orthodoxy of

¹ *The Second True Defence of the Meer Nonconformists*, 1681, pp. 164–82.

² *R.B.*, III, 85.

unfounded suspicions. Then he passes into a somewhat extravagant strain of invective against the censorious dogmatists and hypocritical pretenders of the day, against Baxter's personal assailants in particular; and ends with a prayer that God would bless his indefatigable labours to the right instruction of Christians in the truth of their own woefully misunderstood religion; to the quelling of their animosities; and to the amendment of their lives.

Baxter's reply, dated Totteridge, October 7, 1671, is worthy of quotation as a truly Christian plea for charity towards the censorious. Such persons (he says) may 'deserve the hard names you bestow upon them. But I take the boldness to advise you to beware of that temptation, wherewith I have been sometimes assaulted, which is to be too sensible of, and too impatient with, this unhappy infirmity of others, *when it is found accompanied with an upright heart* . . . we are men and have all our passions, and too much sense of self-interest to feed them. And who can walk in crowded streets and not be jarred and sometimes thrust into the dirt, be the passengers ever so honest and civil?' 'It is ignorance that causeth this confidence and censoriousness, even in abundance of (otherwise) honest souls. And alas! how common is ignorance in all the world, and of how difficult cure! How few are born with a natural capacity of large and clear and distinct apprehensions! and of those few, how few have the happiness of sound judicious teachers that will not lead them into error and faction! And how few escape the snares of common opinion, and of the votes of the multitude, the stream of the Learned Tribe, or the dictates of the powerful and great—to contradict any of which (though self-contradictory) is taken for uncivil arrogance. Yea, alas, how few scape the perverting bias of ambition, covetousness, or sensuality! What wonder then if discerning and truly judicious heads are few! And if men must be ignorant they will be erroneous and censorious. And even the godly upright soul that hath the greatest love to truth, and is most serious in religion, and most abhorreth all that he thinketh contrary to the will of God, will be most zealous in his errors, and against that good which he thinketh to be evil, having not light enough to see that which should bring him to

self-suspicion and abate his heat. It is commendable in them that they desire all men should befriend the truth and none gainsay it, as far as they understand it; and that they are offended at that which they think God is offended with. Dogs and swine contend not about gold. When all is done, it is the serious Christian who is a Christian indeed, and shall be saved, notwithstanding his mistakes. . . . Good people must be loved for their goodness, though they be troublesome by their weakness . . . we may be happy here (in our low degree) without their Love to us, but not without our Love to them. If our Lord at His resurrection sent presently to them that lately had forsaken Him and fled; so loving and tender a message as this—"go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John xx. 19), I will take infirm brethren for my brethren, though they should forsake me. And yet my experience assureth me, that, while I do, they will not forsake me. For love will constrain love, when wrath doth quench it. And the children of God, though froward and wrangling, have some discerning of the spirit of God, and will still be known by the world to be Christ's disciples by loving one another. I could give you some notable historical instances, but I must crave your pardon of this prolixity and rest

‘Your unworthy fellow servant,

‘R. BAXTER.

This letter reached Fowler on November 4, just as he returned home to Northil after twenty days' absence; and, though extremely tired with his journey, and 'with much business upon him besides' he acknowledged it at once. It speaks well for the young clergyman that he welcomed Baxter's faithful words. 'The most blessed Christian spirit you have discovered in your many Learned and elaborate Treatises, and now in the very excellent lines you have honoured me with, I exceedingly reverence and love you for'.

'I must with sorrow and shame, confess that the sourness of other men's Spirits doth too often leaven my own'.

'I trust that I shall by the blessing of God, reap such advantage by your letter as may abound both to your and mine account'.

‘I shall greatly rejoice may I ever have an opportunity of testifying my thankfulness by some real service.

‘Your excessively obliged servant,’

‘EDW. FOWLER.’¹

In August 1673 Fowler was preferred to All Hallows, Bread Street, London; and in March, 1677, became what Baxter calls ‘the envied Pastor of St Giles, Cripplegate Church’. He was still there when his firm stand at a meeting of the London Clergy turned the scale against the public reading of James II’s Declaration of Indulgence on the Sundays, May 20 and 27, 1688²—a momentous decision.

His elevation to the See of Gloucester in July 1691 may be taken as a reward for this. But the noticeable point is that, throughout his career, he was deeply influenced by the principles, the spirit, the ideals of those Cambridge men, especially John Smith, under whom he had been trained and about whom he wrote in his first book.³ He was their disciple and yet he confessed himself a disciple of Baxter. Could he have done so unless he had found much in common between them? There was another eminent Puritan to whom Fowler and his Cambridge teachers were anathema. This was John Bunyan. Because Fowler had once been a Presbyterian Chaplain Bunyan expected him to give up his living in 1662; and took him for a man of ‘weathercock spirit’ when he stayed on. Though not known by face to each other, nothing is more likely than that the Bedford preacher’s evangelistic tours included Northil, and that he heard enough of the Latitudinarian Rector to excite a bitter prejudice. Anyhow, his prejudice against him was very bitter; and, when Fowler published his second book, its bare title made him explode—‘The Design of Christianity, or a plain Demonstration and improvement of this proposition, that the enduing men with inward real righteousness, or Holiness, was the ultimate end of our Saviour’s coming into the world and is the great Intendment of the Blessed Gospel’. A copy of the book sent from London,

1 See for these letters, Baxter MSS., iv, f. 33^{ab}, 35^{ab}, 36^{ab}; vi, f. 41^a

2 Macaulay’s *History of England*, chap. viii.

3 *Free Discourse on the Latitude Men* (1670)

came to Bunyan in Bedford Jail on February 13, 1671-2; and by March 27, he had written an invective covering fifty-four double-columned quarto pages, closely printed, in Offer's edition of his works (1859). Its single theme is expressed in the words: 'from the beginning to the end, from the top to the bottom, a cursed blasphemous book; a book that more vilifieth Jesus Christ than many of the Quakers themselves'. Poor Bunyan's uncontrolled abuse is altogether regrettable, and so is that of the rejoinder (said to be by Fowler's Curate) entitled—'*Dirt wiped off, or a manifest discovery of the gross ignorance, erroneous, and most unchristian spirit of one John Bunyan, Lay Reader in Bedford*'. But my reason for mentioning the matter is to ask a question. Have we not here an explanation of the strange fact that Baxter and Bunyan seem to have avoided each other? So far as I know, Baxter nowhere mentions Bunyan nor Bunyan Baxter. Yet they were the two greatest spirits in Puritanism, its two most famous preachers, its two most influential writers. By 1672 *The Saint's Rest* had come to its eleventh edition and the *Call to the Unconverted* its thirteenth edition; whilst at least Bunyan's *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, published in 1666, had spread far and wide. But Baxter does not refer to it, nor has he a word to say about *The Pilgrim's Progress*, subsequent to its appearance in 1678. Bunyan, too, is equally silent about anything written by Baxter. True, they did not openly assail each other, and this may be taken to imply a degree of mutual respect; but had they not resolved, by a sort of tacit consent, to ignore each other? Moreover, after 1672 when Bunyan was released from Bedford Jail, and Baxter removed from Totteridge to Bloomsbury, they might easily have met. Bunyan came up to London every year or oftener. He had many friends there. Dr Owen was one of them, and received him as a guest. He preached for Owen in his Church at Moorfields, and for Rev George Cokayn at Red Cross Street, and for others to whom Owen gladly introduced him. He even lectured at Pinner's Hall where Owen regularly took his turn with Baxter. People of fashion, and city merchants flocked to hear him from time to time; and he was befriended, or patronized, by Sir John Shorter, one of the Lord Mayors—so

giving rise to the legend that he had him for a chaplain. As to the general public—‘When Mr Bunyan preached in London, if there were but one day’s notice given, there would be more come together to hear him preach than the meeting-house could hold’. This Bunyan-furore went on year after year till 1688 when the dreamer died (August 31) in London, and was followed by vast crowds to his grave in Bunhill Fields. Throughout the whole period Baxter was living within easy reach at Bloomsbury or Highgate or Charterhouse Square. Yet there is no hint of a meeting, or a word, between them. We could not learn from either alone that the other so much as existed. What else than the *odium theologicum* can account for so sinister a silence? And if it be suggested that Baxter must share the blame, the answer lies in his general attitude. Theological differences might, and did, evoke hard words; but they never excited his personal rancour. Having spoken his mind, he was prepared for peace, and even friendship, with his opponent. On the other hand, from his first book—*Aphorisms of Justification* (1649)—Baxter became an object of suspicion, and often of venomous attack, for his alleged denial of Justification by faith *alone*, his insistence on obedience to Christ as a conjoint factor, and his way of conceiving the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Nothing he said in self-defence, no apologies he offered for his own ‘sharp’ language, no modifications of his doctrine in manner of presentment, availed to conciliate his adversaries. He was made to feel himself outside the pale of tolerance, or even courtesy. Hence it would not be surprising if one effect of such treatment was to make him resolve to hold aloof from those who were guilty of it; and, so, in particular, from Bunyan when he saw him, with the air of a Pope, pouring out his vials of wrath on a man whom he esteemed both for his own sake and for his teaching. This, I take it, may explain Baxter’s silence without the implication of any private animus; while, if Bunyan could not endure Fowler, he would be unable, for the same reasons, to endure Baxter. And perhaps his friend Dr Owen may have influenced him. Owen was one of the first to repudiate Baxter’s ‘heresy’;¹ and it is easy to imagine that when he and Bunyan talked the

¹ In the second edition of his *Salus Electorum Sanguis Jesu* (1651).

matter over, the latter's revulsion would not be softened by the Doctor, though he might be advised to say nothing in public. And was it simply a coincidence that, soon after Bunyan's first visit to London, trouble arose at Pinner's Hall where the unsleeping guardians of orthodoxy—mostly Independents—detected in Baxter's Lectures strong evidence of his dreaded heresy and quickly spread a report to that effect? 'The city and country'—he says—rang with the outcry that he was a preacher of 'Arminianism and Free Will and Man's Power', odious crimes!¹ One result was his pamphlet of Self-vindication which he called 'An Appeal to the Light'; another was his withdrawal from Pinner's Hall, *whereby he made way for Bunyan*. It was a saddening situation; nor was there any present remedy, since both parties were full of zeal for what they held to be the essentials of faith. Besides, both were right in what they meant to affirm. Baxter was right, as we see now beyond question, in affirming with Fowler, that real Salvation is identical with real personal holiness; and Bunyan, too, was right in affirming that Evangelical righteousness springs from union with Christ, from the life of Christ in the believing Soul, from what Paul meant by the words—'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'. Baxter did not dream of denying this, nor did Bunyan ever really mean to deny the necessity of a holy character. But the former was not so vividly true to Baxter as to Bunyan, nor the latter so vividly true to Bunyan as to Baxter. As in many another instance of theological discussion, a change of emphasis was construed to imply a denial of truth.

¹ R.B., III, 103, 154.

CHAPTER 3
STUDENT AND WRITER

IT is easy to picture Baxter's daily course of life in the retirement of Acton and Totteridge—family worship, breakfast, some hours of study and (wherever possible) an hour's brisk walk before dinner. Then study and another walk before the evening meal, followed by further study with never any omission of the quiet hour for meditation. But his wife saw to it that he did not forget some domestic duties, such as catechizing his servants once a week, and instructing them familiarly one by one; nor did she let him off his share of simple social intercourse with friends and neighbours who happened to call. He admits a growing tendency to remissness and decay of spirits which inclined him to be 'much more seldom and cold in profitable Conference and Discourse' in the house than he had been when younger.¹ Mrs Baxter marked these defects of the habitual and brooding student and knew how to check them. 'If I carried it (as I was apt) with too much neglect of Ceremony or humble Complement to any, she would modestly tell me of it; if my very looks were not pleasant she would have me amend them'. This he acknowledges was good for him. At least it helped to restore his soul to its natural tone of genial kindness. Still, his chief business was study, concentrated study, without loss of a minute while it lasted; for he set a miser's value on time. And, in his case, study meant not so much the reading as the writing of books. A wonderful power of quickly abstracting and absorbing the marrow of a book left wide margins of time for writing; and there was always some subject which urged him to write. It is not in my plan to notice, or even to mention, all, or even many, of the books, great and small—160 odd—which flowed from his pen for forty years. Such a task would be as tedious as unprofitable. But, in view of some cheap sarcastic criticism of him as a man enslaved by the sheer lust of writing, I may, once for all, beg the reader to weigh what seems to me his admirable self-defence in the following passage: 'When I first intended writing . . . being of that mind that thought nothing should

¹ B., p. 70.

be made public but what a man had first laid out his choicest art upon I thought to have acquainted the world with nothing but what was the work of *Time* and *Diligence*. But my conscience soon told me that there was too much of Pride and selfishness in this; and that Humility and Self denial required me to lay by the affectation of that style, and spare that industry which tended but to advance my name with man, when it hindred the main work, and crost my end. And Providence drawing forth some popular unpolished discourses, and giving them success beyond my expectation, did thereby rebuke my selfish thoughts, and satisfy me that the Truths of God do perform their work more by their *Divine Authority*, and *proper Evidence* and *material Excellency*, than by any *ornaments of fleshly* wisdom; and (as Seneca saith) though I will not despise an *Elegant Physician*, yet will I not think myself much the happier for his adding eloquence to his healing art'.¹ Add to this, that he lived day by day in the belief that he was a dying man; that what message he had to deliver must be delivered at once, if at all; and that (after 1662) there was no way open to him but by his pen; and surely the case is made out for a fair estimate of his literary value. It might have been vastly higher if he had given himself to the attainment of literary excellence; but he deliberately resigned such excellence for an unselfish end. Was there not something noble in his choice? And yet, even so, it is true that there is no writer of the seventeenth century whose works contain a richer storehouse of clear and spontaneously eloquent English prose than Baxter's. Their themes may be mostly dead, but their literary quality has the permanence of pure gold. These remarks are suggested here by the fact that his literary output reached its height and (as he thought) its crown at Acton and Totteridge. The mere amount of his written work is amazing and cannot be measured by what was immediately published. Not a little did not see the light till a much later date, owing to difficulties with the censor, or considerations of prudence, or lack of funds.¹

¹ Introductory Epistle to *Saint or a Brute!* (1662).

² e.g. *An Apology for the Nonconformists' Ministry* . . . 1681 (mostly written about 1670). *The second part of the Nonconformists' Plea for Peace* . . . 1680 (partly written in 1668). *A Treatise of Episcopacy* . . . 1681 ('written in 1671 and cast by'). *Methodus Theologiae* . . . 1681 (written 1670-2), etc.

Bearing this in mind, we may say that fifteen or sixteen books (not counting pamphlets) were the product of the years between 1663 and 1672. But two of these were great folios, and are noticeable because, taken together with his 'Catholick Theology' (1675), they present his complete system of Christian practice, doctrine, and philosophy. The labour spent upon them was immense; but only one had any sale to speak of. This was *A Christian Directory*—a comprehensive system of Christian ethics in four parts, as applied to private duties, home duties, church duties and duties to our rulers or neighbours. Baxter had resolved many a casuistical point for members of his congregation at Kidderminster, and was probably more often consulted on such points by correspondents than any minister in England; and it is not unlikely that, in this way, he gradually collected ample materials for a systematic Treatise. It was begun and finished at Acton, and laid aside for years.¹ The impulse to write it came partly from Archbishop Usher, and partly 'from some transmarine Divines' who wanted a 'Sum of Practical Divinity in the English Method'. He did not think much of it himself—'being hut a skeleton of Practical Heads' 'divested of all life and lustre of style'; but thought it might be useful to young ministers and the more Intelligent and diligent sort of Masters of Families.² Its publication, however, in 1672 was followed by two reprints in a few years. For, in fact, its style, its method and its contents recommended it. The style is admirably lucid; the method is comprehensively simple; while the contents supplied, in a satisfying way, a widespread need of the time, among thoughtful Protestants, Conformist or Non-conformist, for a wise and understanding application of doctrine to the whole round of life. It is one of the few of his books which still has its appreciative readers; and is found to yield 'savoury meat' wherever it is opened.³ Very different was the fate of the second folio—a Latin Treatise called *Methodus Theologicæ*—which he began at Acton and finished at Totteridge. He says: 'I wrote it and my English Christian

¹ *R.B.*, III, 61.

² *Ibid.*, I, 122. ³ A sign of this is the Volume of excerpts from 'the Directory' which Mrs Tawney has lately published (1925) with an Introduction by Bishop Gore.

Directory to make up a complete Body of Theology, the Latin one for the theory and the English one the practical part'. But while the latter was commonly accepted, the former found few, if any, readers. Perhaps the only man who both read and admired it was Sir Matthew Hale, to whom Baxter lent a specimen of it in MS. Sir Matthew was so taken with it that, though in his last illness at the time, he could not be persuaded to lay it by. It suited him, in fact, because its abstruse speculation and severe expositions fell in with his own bent.¹ For Baxter's ambition was nothing less (after twenty-six years of study) than to do what many a Philosopher has essayed to do—construe all existence in the light of a single principle. His principle was the Divine Trinity in Unity—'which hath exprest itself in the whole frame of Nature and Morality'. He discovered clear confirmation of his principle in the three first chapters of Genesis. He followed it out in a series of schemes; and it was Sir Matthew Hale's great approbation of the first scheme—the scheme of the Creation—which inspired him to go on with the rest. He 'importuned me so by Letters to go on with that work and not to fear being too much on Philosophy, as added somewhat to my inclinations and resolutions: and through the great Mercy of God, in my retirement at *Totteridge* in a troublesome, poor, smokey, suffocating room in the midst of daily pains of the sciatica, and many worse, I set upon and finished all the schemes, and half the elucidations in the end of the year 1669, and the beginning of 1670, which cost me harder studies than anything that ever I had before attempted'.²

Shall we pity him? I think not. On the contrary, one may envy that inward vision of what seemed to him a great truth, and that absorbing ardour in its pursuit, which could lift his consciousness away from the sordid and painful actual, and leave it free to expand in the serene light of an ideal world. Nor is it certain that his first principle is more absurd than that of some other metaphysical systems which have had their little day of fame. But Baxter's system brought him neither fame nor gain. 'The times were so bad for selling Books that I was fain to be myself at the charge of printing my *Methodus*

¹ *R.B.*, III, 181. ² *Ibid.*, III, 70.

Theologiae. Some friends contributed about eighty pounds towards it. It cost me, one way or other, about five hundred pounds. About two hundred and fifty pounds I received from those Nonconformists that bought them. The contrary part¹ set themselves to hinder the sale of it, because it was mine, though else the doctrine of it, being half Philosophical and half conciliatory, would have pleased the learned part of them. But most lay it by as too hard for them, as over scholastical and exact'. A third folio which came out in 1675 but was mainly composed at Totteridge, and begun at Acton, bore the title *Richard Baxter's Catholick Theology: Plain, pure, peaceable; for the Pacification of the dogmatical word warriors*, and was 'written chiefly for Posterity, when sad experience hath taught man to hate theological logical wars, and to love and sue and call for peace'. In three books it treats respectively

- (1) of Pacifying Principles about God's decrees.
- (2) of Pacifying Praxis or dialogue about the five Articles.
- (3) of Pacifying disputations against some real errors which hinder reconciliation.

It is Baxter's most elaborate study of current theological controversies, and statement of his own (nearly always) intermediate position between strict Calvinists and extreme Arminians. Whoever wishes to understand what is meant by Baxterianism must consult it, nor will anyone who goes to it simply in search of rich thoughts eloquently expressed and redolent of the Christian Spirit, be disappointed. But says Baxter (about 1678): 'This book hath hitherto had the strangest fate of any that I have written except the *Reformed Liturgy*—(viz.) not to be yet spoken against, or openly contradicted, when I expected that both sides would have fallen upon it'. By 'both sides', of course, he meant the Calvinists and Arminians; but the probability is that both ignored it because neither side took the pains to read it. It was a gigantic instance of 'Love's labour lost'. Another large book, but far

¹ *R.B.*, III, 190. A scurrilous pedant like Henry Stubbs (1632–76) attacked his Latin as so bad that if one of the articles for condemning John Hus, the Martyr, to the fire was that he wrote false Latin, Baxter would not have escaped at the Council of Constance. Two Treatises—in '*defence of the good old cause and a vindication of Sir Harry Pane*' (1659), page 18.

less bulky than the three folios, was occasioned by a letter which he ascribed to 'a masked juggling Papist'—a clever letter, and calculated to stir up all manner of doubts as to the truth of the Christian religion; and, indeed, of all religion. Its effect on Baxter was to set his own mind questioning and examining. Not for the first time, but more thoroughly, he tested the grounds of his faith—the whole ground of natural and revealed religion, and then produced a work which (with all due allowances) still stands as a monument of convincing 'Apologetic'. It was one of the first of its kind in the language; and, in respect of its method, one of the best. For his aim was to look at Christianity, not in isolation, but in the light of first principles and their historical manifestation, and so work up to it as the climax of a long developing Providence. He called it *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*; and, when it was done, he added—in a fortnight¹—an appendix of 115 pages on the Immortality of the soul, inasmuch as this was the most questioned doctrine of the time, owing to the influence of Gassendus, the Hobbians and others. It presents Baxter intellectually on his highest levels; and is not the less impressive because of the intense emotion which, here and there, breaks through the hard crust of his argument. Not a few on reading it must have felt as warmly grateful for it as his friend Dr John Bryan of Coventry who, in a letter of October 6, 1667, spoke of it as 'a most gracious present'.² Even the Censor's suspicions of everything offered by Baxter were undisturbed: for it was about the only book of his which at once found its way through the press.³

¹ The date on last page of Treatise is Oct. 16, 1666; that of the Appendix is Oct. 31.

² Baxter MSS, (Letters), v, ff. 192^{ab}.

³ For a further consideration of this book, see *infra* Part II, the chapter on 'Baxterianism.'

CHAPTER 4
BACK IN LONDON

THE Second Conventicle Act (passed April 11, 1670) came into force on May 10 and aroused extreme resentment everywhere, but especially in London.¹ Proceedings under the Act were taken at once. On the other hand, the Nonconformists were resolved to hold their ground. On the 18th Sir J. Robinson, Governor of the Tower, wrote to Secretary Williamson: 'There is a perfect combination to bailie the Act. It cannot be imagined what artifices are used to menace the officers, soldiers and other guards; and though the private meetings have been left off, the public ones have taken full resolution to go forward, notwithstanding many have been convicted. Colonel King—taken last Sunday—is the great advocate for the meeters'.² Among the ministers who still keep up their meetings were Drs Owen, T. Goodwin and Manton. In consequence, Dr Manton, at least, presently found himself sentenced to six months' imprisonment in the Gatehouse; while 'Bands of Soldiers' were afoot 'in a hot pursuit of private preaching, to the terror of many, and the death of some'.³ The employment of soldiers (of the Guard) was an ominous sign not only of the turbulency and difficulties of the situation, but of the fact that the constables and trainbands could not be trusted. There is a letter (dated Whitehall, May 23) from Sir J. Trevor to Lord Arlington which illustrates this:

' . . . The Lord Mayor has been to the Duke (of York?) for directions, and informed him, in my hearing, that the Civil Authority of the City could not execute the Act, that the informers and constables were so frightened by the people that none would act; that the trained bands were as little inclined to suppress them by necessary force; and that, although the little meetings had been dispersed, there were three great Presbyterian meetings, where the doors were defended by 3,000 or

¹ *S.P.D.*, 1670—see, for many instances, pp. 164–369.

² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

³ *R.B.*, III, 74.

4,000 people who refused to move but by violent force. It has therefore, now to be considered whether his Majesty will think it advisable to pursue the Act so far as to employ the Guards. . . . I fear the consequences to the Government if a tumult is begun and blood drawn. . . . I consider the matter appears very melancholy on both parts and am more confirmed in my opinion that it was very unhappily and unnecessarily brought to a trial'.¹ The persecution slackened towards the end of the year, but it did not cease either in London or elsewhere. It went on more or less throughout 1671, but less rather than more. Its intensity largely depended on the Bishops' attitude; and Baxter seems to mention it as an exception to the rule that 'this year (1671) Salisbury Diocese was more fiercely driven on to conformity by Dr Seth Ward, their Bishop, than any place else, or than all the Bishops in England besides, did in theirs. Many hundreds were persecuted by him with great industry'.²

Indeed, the tide was obviously beginning to turn. A sign of this was the reported desire of the Bishops and their agents (moved by great fears of Popery) for an accommodation with the more moderate Nonconformists.³ This was in the end of 1670; and another sign was the successful appeal, some time later, of certain Quakers against a Judge who fined and imprisoned many jurymen in London for not finding them guilty of violating the Act against Conventicles. The appeal, after a year's suspense, was sustained by the Judges, and the Lord Chief Justice Vaughan, in delivering their resolution, made a speech of two or three hours long vehemently asserting 'the subject's Freedom from such force of Fines'. 'Never since the King's return was a speech welcomed with greater joy and applause by the people', and the Judges shone forth as the pillars of law and liberty." But relief came on a wider scale through the King. Baxter's narrative here, is illuminating. The Parliament which had 'made the Laws against Nonconformists preaching and private religious meetings, etc., so

¹ *S.P.D.*, 1670, p. 233.

² *R.B.*, III, 86.

³ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴ *R.B.*, III, 87; *S.P.D.* (1670), p. 440. See App. 3

grinding and terrible' was prorogued;¹ and 'the King (who consented to those Laws) became the sole Patron of the Non-conformists' Liberties; not by any abatements by Law but by his own connivance as to the execution, the Magistrates for the most part doing what they perceived to be his will. So that Sir Richard Ford, all the time of his Mayoralty in London (though supposed one of the greatest and most knowing adversaries) never disturbed them.'² We can detect the note of doubt here—doubt of the King's right or wisdom. But many of his London brethren were simply thankful. They were encouraged, and were glad, to present their addresses to the King, and acknowledge his clemency as the spring of their liberties; and the King, for his part, told them 'that though such Acts were made, he was against Persecution, and hoped ere long to stand on his own legs, and then they should see how much he was against it'. 'By this means, many score Non-conformable Ministers in *London* kept up preaching in private houses: some 50, some 100, many 300, and many 1,000, or two thousand at a meeting, by which for the present, the city's necessities were much supplied.' 'Those that from the beginning, thought they saw plainly what was doing, lamented all this', and Baxter was one of them. He had too vivid a recollection of the King's weakness, to say the least, to rely upon his constancy; and he held by the belief that, though Parliament had gone wrong, its error could be retrieved only by its own act. The making and unmaking of Laws belonged to it alone. Besides, he had a shrewd suspicion, as indeed the other Ministers had, that the King's purpose was rather to benefit the Papists than the Nonconformists; and he foresaw that for the latter to approve his action was, in the state of public feeling, the way to cause worse treatment in the near future. Hence it was with a sense of misgiving that he recorded the two startling events of March 1672–3 in which the King pushed his defiance of Parliament to a climax—the proclamation of War by sea and land against the Dutch; and a Declaration of Indulgence to all dissenters from the Church.³ In

¹ On April 22, 1671, to April 16, 1672, then to Oct. 30 and again to Feb. 4, 1672–3.

² *R.B.*, III, 87.

³ Baxter refers to this as 'giving a fuller exposition (to those that doubted of it) of

common with the vast majority of the nation the former shocked him as a treacherous breach of the Triple Alliance and a terrible blow at a small Protestant power which the insatiable greed of France, its mighty Catholic neighbour, was threatening to overwhelm; while the latter he felt sure would turn out a delusive boon. It granted a convenient number of public Meeting-places for Nonconformists on condition that the persons licensed were approved by him; that they never met in any place not approved by him; that they set open the doors to all comers; that they preached not seditiously; and that they said nothing against the discipline, or government, of the Church of England. So far good. But what of the Papists? Baxter thought them the more favoured party. For, although forbidden to meet in public places, they were made free of their own 'houses (anywhere, under their own government) without limitation or restriction to any number of places or persons, or any necessity of getting approbation'.¹ This fact of itself was a rock ahead, upon which the Indulgence might be expected to break up. When the London ministers met to talk over the matter some marked differences of attitude disclosed themselves. A few were for a thanksgiving to his Majesty couched in such high applauding terms that almost all the rest were disgusted. Others were for avoiding terms of approbation lest the Parliament should fall upon them. Others, again, were for keeping silence because they did not want a toleration so much as a comprehension. These last urged that the toleration, being chiefly for the Papists, would hold no longer than that interest required it, whereas a comprehension, if it could be effected on fair terms, would go far to restore the unity of the Church. This, of course, was Baxter's well-known view—though he was not present at the meeting. In the end, the parties found they could not agree on any form of Thanksgiving. It was, therefore, in a divided

the Transactions of these Twelve years last' *R.B.*, III, 99. He means that the King had been aiming at this all along—'by virtue of his Supreme Power in Matters Ecclesiastical.' See Appendix No. 4 for a more definite expression of his mind about the King.

¹ *Ibid.*, III, 99. See Bates (1908), *The Declaration of Indulgence*, chap. v, for a careful study of the subject.

state of mind, though outwardly agreed, that the Lord Arlington introduced them to the King for an 'Extemporate Thanksgiving'.¹ That is, those of the Ministers who entered the Presence spoke each for himself or his party.

The events of this year (1672) included one which left Baxter considerably the poorer. On January 1 the King, with a view to financing the meditated war against Holland, caused his Exchequer to be shut up. In other words, money advanced to the Government (about 13 hundred thousand pounds) by the London Bankers—money invested with them by 'a multitude of merchants and others'—ceased to yield interest. Baxter was among the 'others,' and virtually lost £1,000, all the money he had in the world of his own. It seems to have been what he had managed to save (amid the constant claims of charity); and was itself destined to a charitable use—the foundation, namely, of a Free School—as soon as he could purchase some suitable house or land. Strange to say, all his own 'skill and industry', assisted by his best and ablest friends, had failed to secure such a purchase. So, after seven years, he decided to place the money for safety and interest with the Bankers. His only comment on the unexpected loss which ensued, was to the effect that it pretty plainly disclosed the Devil's crafty resistance to his benevolent plans.²

His thoughts of the King's bad faith in this matter may well have been one of the several reasons which made him slow to take advantage of the 'Indulgence'. But the three he mentions were these:

'1. Because I was unwilling to be, or seem, any cause of that way of Liberty, if a better might have been had, and therefore would not meddle in it.

'2. I lived ten miles from *London*, and thought it not just to come and set up a Congregation there, till the Ministers had fully settled theirs, who had borne the burden there in the time of the raging Plague and Fire, and other Calamities, lest I

¹ *R.B.*, III, 99. Bates (op. cit., p. 92) says: 'Baxter states, incorrectly, that on this occasion Owen made an extempore oration.' But he does not mention Owen and the address "penned" by Owen was for the Independents, who acted alone.

² *R.B.*, III, 89.

should draw away any of their Auditors and hinder their maintenance.

‘3. I perceived that no one (that ever I heard of till mine) could get a licence unless he would be intituled in it, a Presbyterian, Independent, Anabaptist, or of some sect.’

The second had the warm support of his wife who, however, as soon as the ministers in question were settled, was earnest with him to go. Accordingly, in October, he delayed no longer, but sent to seek a licence ‘on condition that he might have it without the title of *Independent*, *Presbyterian*, or any other Party, but only as a *Nonconformist*’.

The letter he sent (to an unnamed person) is the following and is dated October 25, 1672.¹

SIR,

My want of acquaintance at the Court occasioneth me to use this boldness in desiring your help in the business here expressed unless it be any inconvenience to you—which if it be, I desire it not. I am one that need his Majesty’s license for preaching, which I have not hitherto sought, partly because I live where my preaching is unnecessary, and partly because by frequent sickness hindered, and partly I hear that Licenses have been denied some who will not take them in the name of some sect—Independent, Presbyterian, or Anabaptist or such like—or as Preachers to such a sect which I cannot do (which occasioneth you this trouble). I, therefore, intreate you to procure me a License on other terms, which I cannot but promise myself to obtain when I read his Majesty’s promise of it to all; and I thinke my follies are not more intolerable than all the rest. I have subjoined my case for him that draweth up the Licenses, to Judge of. If you please to procure me one as a mere Nonconformist, I shall thankfully accept. I pray you let the bearer know when he shall attend you for an answer, unless you lay by the business as inconvenient. And pardon that boldnes to which your candour and kindnes hath encouraged

Your Servant,

R. BAXTER.

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vii, f. 312.

My Case.

My religion is merely Christian, but, as rejecting the Papall Monarchy and its attendant Evils, I am a Protestant. The rule of my faith and doctrine is ye Law of God in Nature and Scripture. The Church which I am a member of is the Universality of Christians, in conjunction with all particular Churches of Christians in England or elsewhere in the world, whose Communion according to my capacity I desire. My judgment of Church Government is for that form of Episcopacy which is described in Ignatius and Cyprian and was the usage then of the Christian Churches. I have taken and own the Oath of allegiance and supremacy. But, my conscience forbidding me to make the solemne declaration of assent and consent to all things contained in and prescribed by the three books, and to subscribe as is required by the Act of Uniformity and the Canon, as also to take the Oxford Oath and the Oath of Canonical obedience, I humbly crave his Majestie's License to preach the Gospel, with a *Non obstante* to my Nonconformity.

R. BAXTER.

October 25, 1672.

On October 27, two days later, an Indulgence was issued for 'Richard Baxter, a Non-conforming Minister to teach in any licensed or allowed place';¹ but was not issued in consequence of his letter. It had been procured by Sir Thomas Player, Chamberlain of London, without Baxter's 'knowledge or endeavour'.²

On November 19 (his Baptism Day, as he notes) he preached for the first time after ten years in a tolerated public assembly. The assembly met in his own house at Totteridge, and cannot have been numerous. Between November and January he was one of the six ministers who preached the Tuesday Lecture at Pinner's Hall, London—quite recently set up by some merchants. But when he had preached there but four sermons he 'found the Independents so quarrelsome with what he said that all the city did ring of their back-bitings and false accusa-

¹ Turner's *Original Records of English Nonconformity*, vol. ii, p. 782.

² *R.B.*, III, 102; *S.P.D.*, 1672, p. 88.

tions'.¹ Though the Lecture was for Presbyterians as well as Independents the latter were the stronger, or the louder, party; and Baxter had to retire. His next engagement was at Mr Turner's Church in New Street neat Fetter Lane where, on January 24, 1672-3, he began a Friday Lecture, and was permitted to continue it 'with great convenience and God's encouraging blessing'. For the Pinner's Hall Lecture the Merchants had provided a fee of '20s. a piece each Sermon';² but for the New Street Lecture, which was Baxter's own creation, he never took a penny of anyone. And here it is fitting to quote what he said, a little later, in answer to the malignants who set it abroad that gain was his object: 'I have these eleven years' (i.e. since 1662) 'preached for nothing. I know not to my remembrance that I have received a groat, as for preaching, these eleven years, but what I have returned. . . . Only four pounds I received for preaching the Merchants' Lecture, and six pounds more was offered me as my due; and some offered me somewhat after a year's preaching at Mr Turner's Church, but I sent it every penny back to them, and resolved (while it is as it is) to take no money for my preaching

- '(1) because I preach but in other men's Churches to people who maintain other Ministers already;
- '(2) because I want not, but have (something) to give, when multitudes are in great necessity;
- '(3) because I will be under no temptation, by dependence or obligation, which may hinder me from dealing plainly with dissenters and offenders.
- '(4) Because I perceive that, when men's purses are sought to, it tempteth many to question whether we sincerely seek the good of their souls. On all which accounts, and not (I think) from proud disdain, I have so long re(used) money for preaching'.³

Mrs Baxter was of the same mind. 'She was so far from crossing me in my preaching freely without salary, or gathering a Church that would maintain me, or making collections or getting subscriptions that she would not have endured any

¹ R.B., III, 103. ² Equivalent to a present-day fee of £5 5s.

³ R.B., III, 142.

such thing if I had desired it . . . and was of *Paul's* mind that would rather die than any should make his glorying void and deprive him of that reward. Therefore, it was so far from offending her . . . that I neither conformed, nor took any place of gain, that it was as much by her will as my own, that for the first nine or ten years of my ejected state I took not so much as any private gift to supply my wants, except ten pounds a year from Sergeant Fountain, which his importunity, and my civility, would not permit me to refuse.'¹

In another way his conduct at this time was marked by wisdom; and also charity. On the Lord's day he had no congregation to preach to (but, occasionally, to any that desired him) and he resolved not to set up and become the Pastor of a Church unless, or until, further changes should manifest it to be his duty; nor would he administer the Sacrament to any. He had never administered it formerly save to his old Flock at Kidderminster; and he would not begin to administer it now because he saw that to do so would offend the Conformists and have many other present inconveniences, while there was 'any hope of restoration and concord from the Parliament'.²

On February 20 he says, 'I took my house in Bloomsbury in London and removed thither after Easter with my family: God having mercifully given me three years great peace among quiet neighbours at Totteridge and much more health and ease than I expected and some opportunity to serve him'. His wife in this, as in most of his concerns, had a hand. The house was in Southampton Square, a most pleasant and convenient house; and, though taken by him, it was chosen by her, 'out of tender regard to his health which she thought the situation³ might contribute much unto'. Here she spent most of the remaining eight years of her life.

On February 4, 1671, Parliament reassembled after a recess of near two years. One of its first Acts (February 14) was to vote down the King's declaration as illegal. In this, un-

¹ *B.*, p. 60.

² *R.B.*, III, 103. Note that there is no hint of his feeling disqualified to administer the Lord's Supper because of any defect in his orders.

³ N.E. of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, outside the city wall, and open country all round. *B.*, p. 52.

doubtedly, Parliament expressed the popular sentiment; and not less so, 'when it grew into great jealousies of the prevalency of Popery'. It was now, indeed, that the No-Popery panic began that wild career which wound up in the madness of 1679. There were occasions for it, in the successes of the French, with the aid of English troops, over the Dutch; in the discovery—by his refusal to take the oath against Trans-substantiation¹—that the Duke of York was a Papist; in the marriage of the Duke to Mary of Modena, an Italian Papist, akin to the Pope; and there were leaders only too eager to take occasion by the hand—especially Lord Chancellor Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, the Mephistopheles of the Protestant cause. He had once been one of Oliver's nominated Parliament. With Charles II he had been a favourite, next to Buckingham; had been a member of the famous Cabal; and had been 'great in the secretest Councils'.² But, discerning the way of the wind, he now veered to the popular side. Ceasing to speak for the king he championed the Commons; and, 'being quickly put out of his place of Chancellourship, he, by his bold and skilful way of speaking, so moved the House of Lords that they began to speak higher against the danger of Popery than the Commons; and to pass several votes accordingly'.³ Baxter thought it a remarkable sign of the mental perturbation thus induced, that Parliament should decree a Public Fast (February 3, 1673-4), quite in the Puritan fashion, the first of its kind since 1661. But the special preachers, it seems, fell short of expectation. They were Dr Cradock and Dr Whichcote—two moderates who meddled but little with the business of Popery: very different from Dr Stillingfleet who, on a day of humiliation in the previous November, had greatly animated his hearers and the nation by his Anti-Popish diatribe.

¹ In the Test Act (March 29, 1673), that all persons holding any office military, or civil, should take this Oath. The Duke, as General of the Army, resigned his post.

² *R.B.*, III, 109. This was Baxter's and the common belief; but Shaftesbury was not entrusted with the secret of Charles' personal Treaty with Louis XIV (June 1, 1670). Neither was Buckingham nor Lauderdale. It was told to Cliiford and Arlington the other two members of the Cabal—because they were Catholics, or at least partial to Rome.

³ *Ibid.*, 109.

Out of the same fear, which begot a strong desire to unite all Protestants against Popery, arose a proposal, brought to him by the Earl of Orrery, that Baxter should frame in brief, some 'Terms and Means' which he thought might satisfy the Non-conformists. The Earl assured him that 'many great men were for it and particularly the new Lord Treasurer, Sir Thomas Osborn (1631–1712);¹ and Morley, Bishop of Winchester'. The latter's name chilled Baxter's hopes at once. What terms for peace could avail with one who had always acted as its deadly foe? But, in obedience to the charity which never despairs, he wrote down, and enclosed in a letter to the Earl (December 15, 1673), what seemed to him a reasonable platform for agreement. The last words of his letter are these:

'I am confident, were but Dr Stillingfleet, Dr Tillotson or any such moderate men appointed to consult with two or three of us, on the safe and needful terms of Concord, we should, agree in a week's time, supposing them vacant for the business.'² But the Earl passed on Baxter's paper to Morley and the result corresponded to his fear. The Bishop made such strictures upon it as led Baxter to say, in returning them with his answers, 'I have no hope of peace or healing by him, or by his consent, according to the principles and rigour here expressed'.³

On February 24, 1673–4 Parliament was prorogued till November; and Baxter notes that 'the Lord's Day before' one of the Prelatists (a Morleyite) 'preached to them to persuade them that we' (the Nonconformists) 'are obstinate and not to be tolerated, nor cured by any means but *vengeance*, urging them to set fire to the fagot, and teach us by scourges or scorpions; and open our eyes with Gall'.⁴ Evidently he is quoting expressions used by the preacher; and he mentions this case, in connection with others of the like kind, in order to illustrate the hollowness of those overtures for peace which had

¹ Better known as the Earl of Danby (after June 1674).

² *R.B.*, III, 110.

³ The strictures were not signed, but Baxter was sure of their authorship. For the papers in question, see *R.B.*, III, pp. 109–40. They deserve careful study by any who would form an adequate judgment of what the two men stood for.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

been put forward. 'All this while' (he says) 'the aspiring sort of Conformists that looked for preferment, and the Chaplains that lived in fullness, and other malignant factious Clergymen did write and preach to stir up King, Parliament and others to violence and cruelty, against the liberty and blood of the Nonconformists who lived quietly by them in labour and poverty, and meddled not with them, besides their necessary dissent'.¹

Something of the grounds on which the venders of such malice justified themselves may appear from Baxter's account of an interview which befell him in May, 1673, with Dr Gunning (Bishop of Chichester). They met each other accidentally while Baxter was taking his walk in the fields. Gunning was the man with whom Baxter at the Savoy Conference had more contention than with anyone else, not excepting Morley. But they stopped to talk all the same; and, says Baxter, 'at his invitation, went after to his lodgings, to pursue our begun discourse'. The topic was Nonconformity, and Gunning, as usual, spoke his mind. 'He vehemently professed'—(says Baxter)—'that he was sure that it was not conscience that kept us from Conformity, but merely to keep up our reputation with the people, and we desired alterations for no other ends; and that we lost nothing by our Nonconformity but were fed as full, and lived as much to the pleasure of the flesh in plenty, as the Conformists did.'² Believing thus, what else could he do but think of Baxter and his brethren as a crowd of hypocritical self-pleasers who had no claim to merciful treatment? Gunning's state of mind was a revelation to him. The facts were so notoriously otherwise that he 'had thought few men in England could have been so ignorant'. 'But alas I' (he reflected) 'what is there so false and odious which exasperated, factious, malicious minds will not believe and say of others? And what evidence so notorious which they will not out-face?' Before they parted the Bishop had heard a description of the facts³ as Baxter himself knew them, which ought to have been convincing; but his later behaviour towards John Corbet of Chichester (Baxter's friend) shows him unchanged.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141. ² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 105, a very vivid and self-evidencing picture.

For the rest, I think he never afterwards wondered much at the conduct of the Conformist rank and file. Yet (to dispose of this point for the present) he did not spurn a further motion towards Peace which was made to him some eighteen months later (about April, 1675)—although it was said to emanate from the two men whom he least trusted, Bishops Morley and Ward. None so forward as they, it was said, for comprehension and concord. They worked, this time, through Dr Tillotson and Dr Stillingfleet, who sent a message to him by Dr Bates that they desired a meeting with him and Dr Bates and Dr Manton and Mr Matthew Poole, to treat of an Act of Comprehension and Union. He warned his colleagues that they must go warily, in view of the Bishops' record and known temper; but that they might feel themselves safe, at any rate, with the two Deans. Hereupon he and Dr Manton were desired, by the rest, to act. First they went to Dr Tillotson; and a meeting with him and Dr Stillingfleet was arranged for the next week. When the day came Baxter had to go alone, as 'Dr Manton was fain to abscond at the Lord Wharton's', to escape a warrant for committing him to the Common jail—a bad augury! He met the two Doctors and found them sincere in the business as well as 'conceited'¹ that Bishops Morley and Ward were so also'. He, therefore, did not hesitate to read them the Form of an Healing Act which he had prepared.² They desired him to leave it with them to consider. Shortly after, Dr Tillotson brought him a draught of it, with several omissions and alterations. Some of these Baxter accepted; and, after a friendly debate on the whole, they separated in general agreement. Then he consulted some Nonconforming brethren—Mr John Corbet, Mr Talents, Mr Poole, Dr Jacomb and Mr Humphrey with whom he agreed on some further small corrections. They also accepted the 'Healing Act', and Baxter and Poole were deputed to meet the two Doctors for a final procedure. The outcome was an understanding, that the latter should try to get Bishop Ward and

¹ i.e. of opinion.

² Written years before and submitted to Mr Hampden, who told him it would never pass. *R.B.*, III, 157. Cp. Appendix No. 9 to *R.B.*, pp. 127–32, for two other schemes.

Bishop Pierson of Chester (a learned sober man) to meet the former; and should try *at once* while Morley (the likeliest to frustrate) was out of Town. They promised to be speedy; and at once approached the other two Bishops; but as soon as they told them 'only in general', what had been done and what was proposed, 'there was a full end of all the Treaty'. The Bishops cut it short; and the Doctors came away cowed. This is clear from Dr Tillotson's letter to Baxter of April 11, 1675. He had done his part towards a meeting with the two Bishops but had heard nothing since; and goes on, 'I am unwilling my name should be used in this matter; not but that I do most heartily desire an accommodation, and shall always endeavour it. But I am sure it will be a prejudice to me and signify nothing to the effecting of the thing, which, as circumstances are, cannot pass in either House, without the concurrence of a considerable part of the Bishops, and the countenance of his Majesty; which, at present, I see little reason to expect.

'I am, your affectionate brother and servant,

'JOHN TILLOTSON'.¹

2

If we now return to the story of his personal ministry we find that he continued his Friday lecture at Mr Turner's Church, with the addition presently of a Sunday sermon at his own house till he was forced, by a sharp recurrence of illness which lasted for half a year, to desist. But, ere this, he had also taken up a regular charge, at the instance of his wife. He makes out that he himself was slow in the matter. 'At *London* when she saw me too dull and backward to seek any employment till I was called; and that most places in the City had some supplies, she first fished out of me in what places I most desired (to see) more Preaching. I told her in St Martin's Parish where are said to be forty thousand more than can come into the Church'. St Giles, the parish where he lived, and the adjacent parish of Clement Danes were almost in like case; but St Martin's was more destitute, 'especially among all the new Buildings at St

¹ R.B., III, 157.

James's, where neighbours many live like *Americans* and have heard no Sermon of many years. When she had once heard this, without my knowledge she sets one to seek after some capacious room there; and none was found, but divers rooms over the Market-place laid together. She gets one to take them. And they two agreed to importune me to preach each (Sunday) morning, and in the afternoon to get by turns the ablest Ministers they could procure in *London*.¹ And to that end she got a Minister a hundred miles off to come up to help me, promising him £40 a year, to go from day to day to supply the places of such Ministers as should be got. All this charge, besides a Clerk, and a woman to look to the seats, rose high. Part of it the people paid, and the rest she paid herself'.² The Clerk or Reader, was Rev Joseph Read, one of Baxter's former assistants at Kidderminster; and his function was to conduct most of the service apart from the Sermon. It is interesting to learn in what the service consisted. Besides a free prayer, or prayers by Baxter, there were the opening 'Scripture-sentences, the 95th Psalm, the Psalms for the day, the two chapters for the day, singing the Psalms appointed for Hymns, using the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Decalogue; all which is the greatest part of the Liturgy, though none of the Common Prayers were used'. As usual, he aimed at a golden mean; and, as usual, he was misunderstood. Thus, the good woman whom Mrs Baxter had used to hire the rooms, being greatly against the Common Prayer, broke off her attendance in anger. Mrs Baxter had told her that it would not be used, nor was it; but she, in her ignorance, thought herself deceived. There were many like her. In fact, says Baxter, on the strength of this semi-liturgical form of service the Separatists (as on the occasion of his book *The Cure of Church Divisions*) gave out that he had conformed, and openly declared his assent and consent, etc.; and almost all the city believed it. The Prelatists reported the same thing. Nay, in one Episcopal Church they

¹ In Baxter MSS. (Letters) iv, f. 210, is a (very hurried) note to Sylvester dated July 6 (1674?) which seems to show that the getting of suitable Supplies was not so easy, though the 'Expectants' were many, and 'all upon fair pretensions'. 'About the Clerk', he adds, 'I perceive my wife hath or will satisfy you'—as to a successor to Mr. Read?

² *B.*, p. 54.

gave thanks in public that he conformed; and, following on this, came a widespread report that he was to have a Bishopric.¹

Events, however, soon showed how things really stood. It should be remembered that when the King recalled his Declaration of Indulgence he did not recall the Indulgences which had been granted under it. It was still supposed that these were valid; and many went on preaching accordingly. Nor, with few exceptions, was there any interference with them in London or elsewhere. But in February 1674–5 the Licences were recalled;² and Baxter foreseeing that this was about to happen, did something which he hoped might make it clear that his Meeting was not, in the legal sense, a conventicle. He read to his congregation at St James's and seems to have had posted outside the building, the following Profession:

'Though when I began to preach in this place I publicly professed that it was the notorious necessity of the people, who are more than the parish Church can hold, which moved me thereunto, and that we meet not in opposition to, or separation from, the public Churches, yet, perceiving that by some we are misunderstood, I repeat the same profession; and that we meet not under colour, or pretence, of any religious exercise *in other manner than according to the Liturgy and practice of the Church of England*, and that were I able I would accordingly read myself.'³
'Jan. 30, 1674.'

But this did not save him. First of all, he was accused to his neighbour Sir William Poultney, by one that made a Trade as an Informer. But Sir William frustrated his attempt; and, before he could make a second venture, Mr David Lloyd (the Earl of St Alban's bailiff) and other inhabitants so searched the man's quality as a teacher of children that for fear of prosecution he was made to fly. Baxter says he was the first to be molested after the recall of the Licences. Six months later the attack was renewed. He had left St James's, and was preaching only on Thursdays at Mr Turner's; and, this time, the accuser was one Keting—an ignorant fellow who overlooked

¹ R.B., III, 154.

² See Bates, *u.s.*, p. 140.

³ R.B., III, 154. The original in Baxter's hand, is among the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. v, f. 201.

Though when I began to preach in this place I publicly professed that it was the notorious necessity of the people, who are more than the Parish Church can hold, which moved me therunto & that we meet not in opposition to, or separation from the publike Churches; yet perceiving that by some we are misunderstood, I repeate the same profession. And that we meet not under colour or pretense of any Religious exercise *in other Mañer than according to the Liturgie & practice of the Church of England*. And that were I able I would accordingly read myselfe.

Ri: Baxter.

Jan. 30, 1674

the fact that Mr Turner's Church was in the City, so that, by the Conventicle Act, none but a city Justice could try the case. He went to two Justices of the County who lived near Baxter; and they, as ignorant of the law as himself, gave him a warrant to bring Baxter before them, or any other Justices. Keting, and the Constable who apprehended him, allowed Baxter to choose the Justice; but spent a vain day in going from one Justice to another: for none of them was at home. The next day brought a happy issue: for Keting and the Constable, by a lucky mischance, took Baxter to his proved friend Sir William Poultney, who at once made Keting exhibit his warrant as informer. He found (to his surprise) it was signed by Mr Henry Mountague, a son of another friend, the late Ear I of Manchester. Then Sir William showed him and all the company that Mr Mountague's warrant was void for the reason aforesaid. So Baxter was free. On his way out of Sir William's house there took place a little scene which incidentally illustrates what is apt to be overlooked—I mean that the social affinities of Baxter, the Puritan, were aristocratic. He cherished no pride of rank, but people of rank always recognized him and his wife as on their own level. 'I met (he says) the Countess of Warwick¹ and the Lady *Lucy Mountague* sister to the said Mr *Henry Mountague* and told them of the case and warrant, who assured me that he whose hand was at it knew nothing of it.' This proved to be true; and within two or three days Keting was turned adrift. Discharged and disgraced he sought out Baxter, who had not failed to treat him kindly, and speak to him a word in season. When 'at last he found me'—says Baxter—'he would have fallen down on his knees to me, and asked me earnestly to forgive him'. Was his repentance genuine? It seemed to be; and, at any rate, the man was manifestly shaken by fears and tremors of conscience which might lead to a change of life. Baxter was swift to help in such a case. He helped him to pay his debts and to get out of prison. Of the final outcome he says nothing.²

¹ For the saintly Mary, Countess of Warwick (1625–78), see Hutton's *History of the English Church* (1625–1714), pp. 333–4.

² On June 9, 1675, Keting wrote to Baxter from Jail into which he had been cast for debt, begging him to endeavour his deliverance—which he did (*R.B.*,

A third and more successful prosecution arose just when he had good cause for thinking himself safe. ‘Even while I was in this Treaty’ (the Treaty for Peace described above) ‘the informers of the City’ (set on work by the Bishops) ‘were watching my preaching and contriving to load me with divers convictions and fines at once; and they found an Alderman Justice, even in the Ward where I preached, fit for their design, one Sir Thomas Davis, who understood not the law, but was ready to serve the Prelates in their own way. To him Oath was made against me, and the place where I preached, as for two Sermons, which came to three score pounds to me, and four score to the owner of the place where we assembled. But I only was sought after and prosecuted.’¹ The date was about June 9, 1675, and the occasion a Lecture at Mr Turner’s house in New Street.²

This indictment of the Bishops as prompters of the informers should be carefully noted. It was not made at random; it was deliberate; and it was often repeated. He contrasts the Bishops and Clergy (though not all) with the lay officials and citizens of London. ‘The execution of these Laws that were to ruin us for preaching was so much against the hearts of the citizens that scarce any could be found to execute them. Though the Corporation Oath and Declaration had new moulded the City . . . yet were the Aldermen for the most part utterly averse to such Employment, so that whenever an Informer came to them. . . some shifted out of the way, and some plainly denied and repulsed the accusers, and one was sued for it. . . . In all *London*, notwithstanding that the third parts of those great fines might

III, 171). There is another earlier letter from Keting (Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, 8) thanking him for what he had done and complaining that he was unable if released, to pay his fees. Doubtless, it was by paying these that Baxter secured his freedom.

¹ *R.B.*, III, 165.

² *Ibid.*, 171. In the same week (June 14) ‘many Bishops were with the King who, they say, granted them his Commands to put the Laws against us in Execution and on *Tuesday* about 12 or 13 of them went to Dine with the Sheriff of London, *Sir Nathanael Herne*, where the business being mentioned he told them that they could not Trade with their Neighbours one Day, and send them to Gaol the next’ (*ibid.*, p. 172). For a previous meeting of Bishops with the King, in October 1674, see Bates, *ut supra*, p. 140.

be given the informers, very few would be found to do it,¹ . . . Had a stranger of another land come into *London*, and seen five or six poor ignorant sorry fellows (unworthy to have been inferior servants to an ordinary Gentleman) hunting and insulting over, the ancient Aldermen, and the Lord Mayor himself, and all the Reverend faithful Ministers that were ejected, and eighty-nine Churches were destroyed by the Fire, and in many Parishes the Churches, yet standing, could not hold a sixth or tenth part of the people, yet those that preached for nothing were prosecuted to utter ruin with such unwearied eagerness, sure he would have wondered what these Prelates and Prosecutors are; and it may convince us that the term *διάβολος*; given in Scripture to some men (translated, *false accusers*) is not unmeet: When men pretending to be the Fathers of the Church dare turn loose half a dozen paltry silly fellows, that know not what they do, to be, to so many thousand sober men as wolves among the sheep, to the distraction of such a City, and the disturbance of so many thousand for worshipping God. How lively doth this tell us that Satan, the Prince of the Aereal Powers worketh in the children of disobedience, and that his Kingdom on earth is kin to Hell, as Christ's Kingdom is to Heaven'.²

We have strayed into 1675; and must return to note that the end of Baxter's tenure of St James's Market House was hastened by what he calls a great and marvellous deliverance. On July 5, 1674, 'a main beam, being weakened by the weight of the people, so cracked that three times they ran in terror out of the room, thinking it was falling; but, remembering the like at *Dunstan's* West, I reprov'd their fear as causeless. But the next day, taking up the boards we found that two rends in the

¹ Besides *Keting* Baxter mentions one *Marshall* who died in the Counter where his creditors laid him to keep him from doing more harm (*R.B.*, III, 171). The Bishops set on two more, in his place, who assaulted first *Mr Case's* meeting; and, next, got into *Mr Read's* where Baxter was preaching. His hearers locked them in; and one of the two 'stayed weeping'. Another went to *Mr Rosewell's* meeting, and his heart was so melted by what he heard that he retired from the trade. A fifth (and the chief) became so friendly to Baxter that he rescued him from a half-crazy ruffian in the streets; and 'professed that he would meddle no more'. 'But no Prelate (save one) that I hear of doth repent.' He does not name the one (*R.B.*, III, 166-7).

² *Ibid.*, 165.

beam were so great that it was a wonder of providence that the floor had not fallen, and the roof with it, to the destruction of multitudes'. So far in his Autobiography,¹ Providence, however, as usual worked by means; and the means was Mrs Baxter. 'After the first crack she got down the stairs through the crowd, where others could not get who were stronger. The first man she met, she asked him what profession he was of? He said a carpenter. Saith she, can you suddenly put a prop under the middle of this beam? The man dwelt close by, had a meet prop ready, suddenly put it under; while all we above knew nothing of it; but the man's knocking increased the people's fears and cry. We were glad all to be gone'.² His own coolness prevented a panic, while his wife's clear courage saved the floor and its burden of 800 lives.³ She was a woman much given to fears, but could beat them down in a crisis; and then suffer terribly. Baxter says she never got over all the effects of this experience while she lived. 'The fear, and the marvellous deliverance made her promise to God two things: (1) To keep the anniversary memorial of it in Public Thanksgiving (which she did), and (2) to build a safer place where they might meet with less fear.'⁴ The accident did not break off the services; but when the lease expired, a few months later, it was not renewed. Altogether he preached at St. James's something under two years; and his success must have reminded him of Kidderminster. 'It pleased God to give me marvellous encouragement in my Preaching at *St James's*. The crack having frightened away most of the richer sort (especially the women), most of the congregation were young men, of the most capable age, who heard with very great attention; and many that had not come to Church of many years, received so much, and manifested so great a change (some Papists and divers others returning public thanks to God for their Conversion) as made all my charge and trouble easy to me. Among all the Popish, rude and ignorant people who were inhabitants of those parts, we had scarce any that opened their mouths against us, and that did not speak well of the preaching of the Word among them; though when I came first thither, the most knowing inhabitants

1 *R.B.*, III, 152.

2 *B.*, p. 55.

3 This is Baxter's number 13–56.

4 *B.*, p. 55.

assured me, that some of the same persons wished my death. Among the ruder sort, a common reformation was notified in the place, in their conversation' (or manner of life) 'as well as in their judgments'.¹ No wonder the informers and their inciters found but few sympathizers! After the vacation of St. James's Baxter, during some months, preached regularly only at Mr Turner's on Thursdays;² but also occasionally in private houses.³ According to his own account, he would have been content to go on in this way, partly because he was again very unwell and partly because he did not favour his wife's immediate undertaking of a new Chapel. He judged that this 'being in the face of the Court would never be endured'.⁴ His wife, however, felt bound by her promise; and, moreover, was urged to it by 'the great and uncessant importunity of many'. She began, therefore, presently to seek a fitting site. She wished for one near to St James's; and found one in Oxenden Street, not to her mind, but the best available. 'She could not have it without giving £30 a year ground-rent, and being at all the charge of building on it; and this but for a Lease not very long. But she *must do it* by her promise and desire. She gets a friend to make the bargain, takes the ground, and begs moneys to build

¹ *R.B.*, III, 153. ² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³ Mr Read's, e.g. *ibid.*, p. 171.

⁴ This points to a date later than June 1675.

⁵ The names of her contributors (*R.B.*, III, 172) are good proof, if any were called for, of her social connections and influence. The Lady Armine, £60. Sir John Maynerd, £40. Mr. Brooke Bridges (Son of Colonel Bridges?), £20. Sir James Langham, £20. The Countess of Clare, £10. The Countess of Tre-colonel, £6. The Lady Clinton, £5. The Lady Eleanor Hollis, £5. The Countess of Warwick, £20. The Lady Rickards, £5. Mr Henly, £5 (a Parliament Man). Sir Edward Harley, £10. Mr Richard Hambden and Mr John his Son £8. The Lady Fitz-James and her three daughters, £6. Sir Richard Chiverton, £1. Mrs Reignolds, £1. Mr French and Mr Brandon, two Nonconformable Ministers, £20. Alderman Henry Ashurst and his Son-in-Law Mr Booth £100.

Collected among all their City friends and ours whom they thought meet to move in it.

Baxter himself (to avoid the appearance of evil) would not touch a penny of it; but put it all into the hands of Mr Thomas Stanley, a worthy sufficient Citizen in Bread Street, to disburse. Nor would he make any public collection for the New Chapel in the place where he preached on Thursdays, Mr Turner's. Slander said, all the same, that he used the money for himself. See *infra*—William Baxter's letter to Mrs Baxter, p. 116.

on it a Chapel (which tempted us by the ill-advice of a Friend, to take also the front ground to the Street and build two little houses on it, to our great loss, all her own money and many times more being laid out upon them, much against her inclination)'.¹ Before the Chapel was ready for his use, Baxter (as we have seen) had been heavily fined for two sermons by Sir Thomas Davis, and was closely watched afterwards. It was a cruel addition to the penalty of £20 for the first Sermon and £40 for the second, that the fine was ordered to be levied on the sufferer's goods and chattels. But officers could not force entrance into his (private) house if he kept it locked; and for a time Baxter took advantage of the law, in this respect. At last, however, he became so weary of keeping his doors shut that he let the bailiffs have their way. He did more. When the bailiffs had taken what they chose he sold the rest; sold or hid or gave away his books; and decided to leave his house. Parting from his books hurt him keenly. He had only had them two or three years, after they had lain mouldering twelve years at Kidderminster; and they were the treasure he valued most next to his wife and friends. But 'the Prelates, to hinder me from preaching, deprived me also of these private comforts. But God saw that they were my snare. We brought nothing into this world and we must carry nothing out. The loss is very tolerable'.² He knew that if he were still resolved to preach and had no goods to distrain he was in danger of imprisonment; but he ran the risk, and, once more, he had the full support of his wife. 'When warrants were out (from Sir Thomas Davis) to distrain of my goods for fines for preaching she did, without any repining, encourage me to undergo the loss, and did herself take the trouble of removing, and hiding my library a while (many score being so lost) and after to give away, *bona fide*, some to *New England*³ and the most at home to

¹ *B.*, p. 56. These houses were taken off his hands (or at least one of them) five years later (September 17, 1680). See Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vol. iv, if. 3 84–5.

² *R.B.*, III, 172.

³ In his *True History of Councils* (1682), p. 57, we read: 'I purposed to have given it (my Library) almost all to *Cambridge* in *New England*. But Mr Knowles (yet living) who knew their Library, told me that *Sir Kenelm Digby* had already given them the Fathers, Councils and Schoolmen; but it was History and Com-

‘avoid distraining on them. And the danger of imprisonment and paying £40 for every sermon, was so far from inclining her to hinder or discourage me from anyone sermon, that if she did but think I had the least fear, or self-saving by fleshly wisdom, in shrinking from my undertaken Office work, it was so great a trouble to her, that she could not hide it (who could too much hide many others)’.¹ Such was the situation when the time came towards the end of August 1675² to open the new Chapel. The new Chapel was also, it appears, his new dwelling-house, which could be entered from it through a door in the dividing wall. Here he preached once;³ and had it in mind, after a second Sunday, to go off into the country for a few weeks to escape the heat. He had accepted an invitation to stay with his good friend Richard Beresford, Esq.,⁴ Clerk of the Exchequer, whose home was at Charleswood in the parish of Rickmansworth, Herts—20 miles away. But on a sudden he heard that a resolution had been taken to surprise him on the following Sunday and send him, for six months to the common jail upon the Oxford Act. It transpired that this was the doing of Secretary Henry Coventry⁵ whose house happened to be at the backside of Baxter’s. His friends now were anxious to have him gone at once; and when, on the eve of his departure, he became (as he felt) too ill to travel they compelled him to go, his physician Dr Cox exclaiming that if necessary he would carry him into the coach.⁶

mentary which they wanted. Whereupon I sent them some of my Commentaries and some Historians’.

In a letter from Edward Whichcote—dated Ludlow Dec. 16, 1681—we hear of another gift of books towards a design of the local gentry ‘to put up a Library in the church of Ludlow for the public and common use of the students in this end of the world’. Baxter MSS., iii, 292^a, 293^b. Edward Whichcote was nephew to the famous Dr Benjamin Whichcote. 1 *B.*, p. 61.

2 This date is an inference from the fact that he left London a few days later, was away about ten weeks and back in London by the beginning of November (see *infra*, p. 131).

3 *R.B.*, III, 172; *B.*, p. 56 (One Day).

4 A great admirer and old friend of Baxter (Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, if. 55’, 2 Jan. 1659–60) and his lawyer in his last trial (*ibid.*, vi, 26. Nov. 17, 1686).

5 See *D.N.B.*

6 *R.B.*, III, 172. Matthew Sylvester was one of the friends and was his ‘intended companion’.

So he went to Charleswood; and the country air, the rest, the unstinted kindness of his host and family, proved to be a tonic medicine for body and mind. 'After one week of languishing and pain, I had nine weeks greater ease than ever I expected in this world, and greater comfort in my work'. By his work, of course, he partly means his writing. The book entitled *More Proofs of Infants Church-membership* . . . against Mr Tombes and the notorious Henry Danvers; the book entitled *Two Disputations of original Sin*; . . . the book entitled *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness* against Dr T. Tullie; and the book entitled *Richard Baxter's Review of the State of Christians' Injants* were all finished, written, or begun in this year; and made rapid progress, we may be sure, amid the happy surroundings of Charleswood. But his work there extended beyond writing. Under cover of his old licence from the Bishop of London, and 'the great industry of Mr Beresford', he had 'leave and invitation for ten Lord's days to preach in the Parish Churches round about'. He preached first at Rickmansworth—after thirteen years of ejection and prohibition; then at Sarrat, King's Langley, Chessam, Chalford, and Amersham; and that often twice a day. The people flocked to hear to the number of two or three thousand, many of whom had not come to Church of seven years. And such was their 'attention and willingness as gave him very great hopes that he never spoke to them in vain'. Nor was his work confined to writing and preaching. Two miles from Charleswood was a mansion named Basing-house, occupied, since 1672, by William Penn, a leader and light among the Quakers, second only to George Fox. His residence there had attracted others of his own Society into the neighbourhood; and his zealous propaganda had converted many besides. In fact, the country about Rickmansworth 'began to abound with Quakers'. Baxter had encountered Quakers twenty years before in Worcestershire; and his bad opinion of them, at that time, had remained with him. When, therefore, he heard of Mr Penn and his large local following, his instant desire was to meet Penn in a public debate that so 'the Poor People should once hear what was to be said for their recovery'.¹ Accordingly his host conveyed from him a challenge which Penn at once

¹ *R.B.*, III, 174.

took up. The debate came off on October 5 in two rooms at Charleswood and lasted from 10 o'clock till 5. One Lord, two Knights and four conformable Ministers were among those who filled the rooms. A victory was declared for Baxter; but next day (October 6) there came a letter from Penn demanding a second debate at 8 o'clock on the morning of the 7th—on the ground that the first had been spoilt by the 'indecent carriage' of Mr Beresford and Baxter's tedious harangues, etc. Baxter answered that he was too exhausted by his effort to repeat it quite so soon; but that he did not decline it for some later day. It took place somewhere about the 17th; and, strange to say, whereas the first had been marked by much violent speech on both sides, the second was marked by restraint, and ended in peace. From what Penn wrote, this happy change was due to Baxter who, instead of scorn and bitterness, exhibited 'civility and kindness'. There were reasons for the change in Baxter, which did him honour; and it produced a corresponding change in Penn, so that his last words were these: 'I find we are agreed in more than 3/4ths of our beliefs'; and 'I am, in much love, thy assured friend, W. Penn'.¹ It seems safe to say that from this time Baxter felt less hard towards the Quakers.

Meanwhile, there had been trouble at home. For the Sunday next after his departure for Charleswood Mrs Baxter 'got one Mr Seddon, a Derbyshire stranger then come to town' to preach at the new Chapel. She told him of the danger; and how, if officers entered the Chapel to arrest him while he was preaching, he might escape by the door behind the pulpit. It happened as she feared. Secretary Coventry, thinking Baxter would be the preacher, sent three Justices with a Warrant and Soldiers to apprehend him. And they fell on Mr Seddon instead, who did not use the door of escape. Thinking to pass away in the confusion he went down to the door of the chapel and stood by the Justices and soldiers, till some one said *this*

¹ Reports of the two debates, etc., are among the Baxter MSS. (Treatises). vol. ii, iv, v. The editor of Penn's works—two volumes folio 1726—did not know of them and seems to have thought there was but one debate.

Five of the letters which passed between Baxter and Penn are in vol. ii of the Baxter MSS. (Letters).

is the Preacher—‘And they took him,’ says Baxter, ‘and blotted my name out of the Warrant, and put in his; though almost every word, fitted to my case, was false of him. To the Gate-house he was carried, where he continued almost three months of the six’. He was there when Baxter returned; and one of his first tasks was to get him released. By ‘the Justice of worthy Judge Hale and other Judges’ he succeeded. ‘But he was a tender man, and my wife’ (he says) ‘sensible that she was the occasion’ (of his misfortune) took upon her ‘all the burden to maintain him, to visit and comfort him, to pay the Lawyers and discharge all fees—which I remember, cost her £20. And yet we were calumniated as if I (that was twenty miles off) had put another to suffer in my stead’.¹ He found, too, that the Justices whose clutch he had evaded were so exasperated against him, and so bent upon his capture, that, for once, he yielded to prudence, and did not preach for six months. Then, on April 16, 1676, he ventured to resume, not in his own Chapel but, in one (ready built for gain) hired by his wife in Swallow Street.² Its situation was still in St Martin’s parish near by, and so still among those 60,000 destitute souls for whom she and Baxter felt such compassion. And here, somehow, for about six months he was left alone. But it was only a respite. On November 6, ‘six Constables, four Beadles, and many messengers were set at the Chapel-doors to execute’ a Warrant for his arrest signed by Justice Parry³ and one Sabbes. For that day he forbore to preach; and before the next Sunday, he went to the Duke of Lauderdale and asked him, if he could explain this recrudescence of persecution. The Duke advised him to call on the Bishop of London (Compton). He did so; and was received with fair and peaceable words. But no relief followed. Nothing followed except a ‘noise, as against the Bishop at the Court that he was treating of a Peace with the Presbyterians!’ After a while, Baxter called again, and urged that a word from him would induce Justice Parry to suspend the Warrant. ‘He did as good as promise me’—says Baxter—‘telling me, that he did not doubt to do it; and so I departed

¹ *B.*, p. 57. ² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³ ‘One of them that was accused for slitting Sir John Coventry’s nose’. *R.B.*, III, 178.

expecting quiet the next Lord's Day. But, instead of that, the Constables Warrant was continued, though some of them' (the Constables) 'begged to be excused, and, against their wills, they continued guarding the door for about four and twenty Lord's Days after. And I came near the Bishop no more when I had so tried what their kindnesses and promises signify'.¹

The second half of 1676 was, in fact, what Baxter calls 'a tempestuous time'—due to the King's command that the Laws against Nonconformists should be more strictly enforced, though 'the Nation grew backward to it'. London especially was backward to it; but the Lord Mayor, Sir Joseph Sheldon—near kinsman of the Archbishop—was forward to it; and determined to 'send all the' (nonconforming) 'ministers to the Common Gaols for six months on the Oxford Act, for not taking the Oath, and dwelling within five miles'. He opened his campaign on April 30; and one of his first victims was Baxter's whilom assistant and friend, Rev Joseph Read, who (with the help of friends) had constructed a chapel within his own house in the parish of St Giles, Bloomsbury. Compassion for the unshepherded multitudes around him was his motive, and his success had been great. The people crowded to hear him. But it was just this which made him obnoxious; so, on the aforesaid Sunday, he was taken out of his pulpit and sent to jail—the congregation following him to the Justices, and to the jail, to show their affections. 'It being the place', Baxter adds, 'where I had used oft to preach, I suppose was somewhat the more maliced'.²

As an instance of the clerical temper, widely though not universally prevalent in London at this time, he tells how Dr Lamplugh, Rector of St Martin's (afterwards Bishop of Exeter), behaved towards Rev Gabriel Sangar, M.A., who had been Rector there before him; and, since 1672, had resided in the Parish at the request of old friends. He did not preach except to a few in his own house; but he thought it his duty to visit those of his ancient flock that desired him. One day an old friend of his being sick near St James's market house sent to him to visit her. 'By what time he had awhile prayed by her, Dr *Lamplugh* came in, and when he had done, came fiercely

1 R.B., III, 178. 2 *Ibid.*, 176. 3 1615–1691, same age as Baxter.

to him, saying, “*Sir, what business have you here?*” Mr Sangar answered, To visit and pray with my sick friend that sent for me. The Doctor fiercely laid hold of his breast, and thrust him toward the door, saying, *Get you out of the Room, Sir*, to the great trouble of the woman that lay sick in bed by them, having buried her husband but a little before.’ ‘Mr Sangar oft profest to me the truth of what I say’.¹

It was about the same time—5 June 1676—that Mr Jane,² the Bishop of London’s Chaplain, preaching to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, felt certain of striking the right chord when he flung into his sermon a passage which held up Baxter as an Antinomian Calvinist. ‘*He has sent as bad men to Heaven*’, cried the Preacher, ‘*as some that be in Hell*’. And he meant by the bad men some of those whom Baxter long ago had mentioned in his *Saint’s Rest* as the men whose presence in Heaven would add to his delight—among them being (Lord) Brook, (John) Pim and (John) Hampden. All the rest were great divines mostly Puritan; and the preacher’s appeal at once to political as well as ecclesiastical jealousy was venomous. The more so, since he must have been aware that in the edition of 1659 and all succeeding ones the names of Brook, Pym and Hampden had been deleted purely from a pacific desire to remove what might be to some a stumbling-block. The story brings home to us the sort of stifling atmosphere in which Baxter’s soul had to live—chained, as it was, to a body whose ailments forbad him to carry out his desire and flyaway to some far off haven of rest. Not all the London clergy, however, were like Lamplugh and Jane. Dr Tillotson, for example, was constant in his goodwill and showed it when he could. Thus, just at this time, Baxter consulted him as to what he should do about his Chapel in Oxenden Street, which he was not allowed to use, or get used, for its proper purpose. It had been a dead loss to him financially and cost him £30 a year for the ground rent, but this troubled him less than the fact that, week after week, it stood empty. Tillotson came to his aid by suggesting that he might offer it to Dr William Lloyd the new Rector of St Martin’s, a man of different spirit from Lamplugh; and, perhaps, by writing to Dr

¹ *R.B.*, III, 178. For Mr Sangar, see Palmer’s *Nonconformists Memorial*, vol. ii, 127–9. ² *Ibid.*, iii, 177.

Lloyd on the matter. Dr Lloyd and the Parishioners accepted the offer; and, 'now' (wrote Baxter, 1678) 'there is constant Preaching there: be it by Conformists or Nonconformists I rejoice that Christ is preached to the people in that Parish whom ten or twenty such chapels cannot hold'. Mrs Baxter, it appears, transacted the bargain—'asking no more rent than we were to pay for the ground, and the room over the Vestry at £5'.¹ She was the active party, again, in connection with *Swallow Street Chapel* from which, as said above, he was kept out by Justice Parry. When she saw that the objection was rather to her husband than to its use for preaching, she made it 'her care and act to refer it to many good Ministers to choose one for the place that would be better endured by them that would not endure me, and a faithful, painful, self-denying man was chosen, who hath there done much good, and still doth'.² Baxter wrote these last words in July 1681, when the arrangement made by his wife at *Swallow Street* had gone on for four or five years, i.e. from 1676 or 1677. He adds—'When I was thence driven, it was her choice that I should go quite to Southwark each Lord's day to preach to a Congregation of poor people there'; and 'when Dr Manton's place at *Covent-Garden* was void, it was her desire that I should preach once a day there, because, being near, many of the poor of *St James's* would come thither, as they did'. Dr Manton died on October 18,³ 1677 (aged 57); and so it was after this, but for how long is not clear, that Baxter preached at *Covent Garden*. Whenever this regular engagement ceased, I think it was his last, until in 1687 he joined Mr Sylvester as his assistant in *Charterhouse Yard*. For a further five years, indeed, he continued intermittently his usual Lecture in *New Street*;⁴ but, otherwise, he limited his preaching to sermons occasioned by the death of dear friends,⁵ or a special call, and, of course, his exhortations in

¹ Baxter or his wife some time later purchased the fee simple of the Chapel-ground for £200. Another £200 had to be spent for (or on) the adjoining ground. *B.*, 57. See Calamy's *Historical Account of my Life*, vol. ii, pp. 68–71, for a refutation of the slander that Baxter's account of his transaction with Dr Lloyd contained 'what was known to be very false'.

² *B.*, p. 59. ³ Baxter says 'in November'. ⁴ *R.B.*, III, 19 r.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 189–90.

the family. Thus, by keeping within the letter of the law—which did not forbid mere preaching or family worship—and, moreover, by reason of the truce to persecution of the Nonconformists which prevailed throughout the popish panic, Baxter lived in peace. But when, towards the end of 1681, the panic had spent itself, and a Tory reaction set in, the Bishops again, had their chance. The next few years indeed, are a period in the history of the English Church which her best friends, ever since, have been ashamed of. It was as if her whole soul were concentrated on the extinction of Nonconformity as the sole enemy. Baxter was the first, or one of the first, sufferers. From July till August 14, 1682, he was in some place, unnamed, in the country. Returning in great weakness he lectured twice, in New Street, his second lecture falling on August 24, the twentieth Anniversary of the ejection. He was in a thankful mood and ‘sensible of God’s wonderful Mercy’ which had kept him, and so many more, in a large measure of liberty and peace, notwithstanding the severe laws in force against them and the great number round about who wanted neither malice nor power to afflict them. ‘So I took that day my leave of the pulpit and public work in a thankful congregation’.

But presently his thankfulness seemed ironical. One day, soon after, as he sat in his study, ‘newly risen from an extremity of pain’, an informer, with constables and officers, rushed in and apprehended him on a warrant for coming within five miles of a corporation; and £190, for five sermons. He offered no resistance; but, on his way to the jail, he was met by his neighbour and physician, Dr Cox, who at once forced him in again to his couch and bed; and then went to five Justices and swore that Baxter could not go to prison without danger of death. So they delayed a day till they could see the King, who consented to his being left alone, for a time. But the restraint was made with cruel thoroughness. His books, his goods, even the bed he lay on were taken and sold. This was done despite the fact that Baxter produced deeds to prove that the goods were none of his, and, apparently, despite the fact that some friends paid in money what the goods were valued at. The proceedings were totally illegal, considering that he knew nothing of his accusation, or accusers, nor had received any summons to

appear. But he had no mind to contest the case. 'If they had taken only my cloak,' he said, 'they should have had my coat also, and if they had taken me on one cheek I would have turned the other: for I knew the case was such that he that will not put up one blow, one wrong or slander, shall suffer two, yea many more.' ¹ But such acquiescence was unavailing. Nay, as soon as his enemies heard that he had borrowed some bedding and other necessities they threatened to come and take these too, no matter who might be the owners. So it came to pass that at length he forsook his house and goods and all, and took 'secret lodgings distant in a stranger's house'. In this sad way he departed from the pleasant and convenient house in Southampton Square where his wife had died the year before;² and here, in hiding, weeks and months of such pain as he had never yet known were appointed to him. 'As waves follow waves in the tempestuous seas, so one pain and danger followeth another in this sinful, miserable flesh. I die daily and yet remain alive.' Compared with such pain, Prison, 'with tolerable health, would have been a Palace' to him. It was in these circumstances that he managed to write one of the most beautiful of his books—*Richard Baxter's Dying Thoughts upon Philippians i. 23*. 'I found great need of the constant exercise of patience by obedient submission to God, and writing a small Tractate of it for my own use, I saw reason to yield to them that desired it might be public, there being (especially) so common need of obedient patience.'³ The supreme test of a man's religion, its sincerity and quality, lies in its power to sustain him in extremes: and certainly Baxter's stood the test. But if he had days and nights of sore pain, he did not lack friends. 'I never wanted less (what man can give)', he says, 'than when men had taken all. My old friends (and strangers to me) were so liberal that I was fain to restrain their bounty. Their kindness was a surer and larger revenue to me than my own'.⁴

While he was in his secret lodgings, the abortive Rye House Plot took place (May 1683), and one of its manifold conse-

¹ *R.B.*, III, 191.

² 'But having a long lease of my own House which binds me to pay a greater rent than now it is worth, wherever I go I must pay that rent.' *Ibid.*, 192.

³ *Ibid.*, 196. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

quences was a decree of Oxford University which involved the burning of Baxter's 'Political Aphorisms', i.e. his book called *The Holy Commonwealth*—in the Court of the Schools. He suffered this indignity along with a greater than himself, Milton, whom he never names; and a letter on the subject to his friend John Humphrey, dated July 28, 1683,¹ is proof enough how far away from Milton he was in political opinion. In that letter he supplies his friend with ample material to justify himself and other Puritans from all suspicion of disloyalty; and Mr Humphrey was to pass it on to the Bishop of Oxford. But the suspicion of him was too acute to be allayed: and may account for what happened a little before November 1684. 'While I lay in pain and languishing the Justices of Sessions, sent Warrants to apprehend me (about a thousand more being in Catalogue to be bound to the good behaviour). I thought they would send me to Prison for not taking the *Oxford* oath and dwelling in *London*, and so I refused to open my chamber door to them, their Warrant not being to break it open. But they set six Officers at my study door, who watcht all night, and kept me from my bed and food, so that the next day I yielded to them, who carried me (scarce able to stand) to their Sessions, and bound me in four hundred pound bond to the good behaviour. I desired to know what my crime was, and who (were) my accusers; but they told me it was for no fault, but to secure the Government in evil times; and that they had a list of many suspected persons that must do the like as well as I. I desired to know for what I was numbered with the suspect, and by whose accusation, but they gave me good words, and would not tell me.'² Plainly, in this instance, it was not so much for his Nonconformity as his supposed defect of loyalty that he came under suspicion. On December 11 he had to appear again at the Session-house or else have his bond judged forfeit. The result was the same. Some moderate Justices who had promised his discharge were not there. Sir William Smith and the rest who openly declared that they had nothing against him, yet acting (he was afterwards told) under instructions, told him he must continue bound. He declared to them that he would not; but his Sureties, to keep him out of prison, refused

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), iv, f. 61^{ab}, 62^{ab}. ² *R.B.*, III, 199.

to accept release. So there was no other course for him but to return home and wait. This he did until something worse fell upon him. But before dealing with his last and severest ordeal, we will finish the story of Mrs Baxter.

CHAPTER 5
MRS BAXTER

MRS BAXTER died on Tuesday, June 14, 1681, after an acute illness of eleven days; but she had not been well for long before this. She had, indeed, never been strong. 'A great pain of the head held her from her youth, two or three days every fortnight or little more.' Then, since the terrible crisis, physical as well as spiritual, of 1659—the time of her conversion—she suffered from recurrent fits of depression due to the fear of going out of her mind, as an aunt had done before her. This fear was no mere fancy: for her understanding 'like the treble strings of a lute, strained up to the highest, (was) sweet, but in constant danger'. Her relief from such fear, if not a complete cure, evidently came through the new interests brought by her marriage. Into these she poured all the eagerness of her soul; and found her life in losing it. But the intensity with which she filled every hour of the day had to be paid for; and, perhaps the more so, because (as Baxter shows) it was so quiet and controlled. It had to be paid for by her frail body. In Baxter's phrase 'her knife was too keen and cut the sheath'. She was not more than forty-one,¹ when the end came, but it came inevitably. By then her body had used up its resources; and could make no stand against a conjunction of disease and medical incompetence. Baxter is very simple about her last hours. As he, with Mrs Corbet and others, stood by her bed, she cried out to him '*My mother is in Heaven and Mr Corbet is in Heaven and thou and I shall be in Heaven*'. 'She heard divers Psalms, and a chapter, read, and repeated part, and sung part of a Psalm herself. The last words that she spake were, *My God help me, Lord have mercy upon me.*' On June 17—three days after her death—she was buried in Christ Church, Newgate Street, in her mother's grave. Twenty years before she had caused to be laid over it 'a very fair, rich large Marble-stone', which was broken all to pieces in 1666 when the great

¹ This is a mistake. An entry in the Wellington Parish Registers (found by the Rev. John T. Wilkmson, of Cradley Heath) tells that she was baptized on September 18, 1636.

fire destroyed the Church. 'The grave was the highest, next the old Altar, or Table, in the Chancel.'¹

'She near 19 year lived with me', writes Baxter, 'cheerful, wise, and a very useful life, in constant love and peace and concord, except our differing opinions about trivial occurrences, or our disputing or differing mode of talk.'

There is no doubt that the loss of her

Whose smile had made the dark world bright
Whose love had made all duty light

dried up for Baxter the mainspring of his earthly happiness. He accepted his bereavement as from the Lord and believed that it was only for a little while. 'Blessed be the name of the Lord. I am waiting to be next. The door is open. Death will quickly draw the Veil, and make us see how near we were to one another and did not (sufficiently) know it.' But it was 'under the power of melting grief' that he lifted the burden of his lonely life; and went onward in what was more than ever to him, the wilderness of this world. He found an anodyne to his grief in memory; and it was memory that dictated the beautiful appreciation which he called 'a Breviate of the Life of Margaret . . . Baxter', written within a month of her death. From this gem of biography we have already quoted freely; but if we care to know more of her and what she was to her husband some further extracts will be welcome.

Under the heading 'of her exceeding desires to do good' we are told that 'as at her conversion, and in her sickness, she absolutely devoted herself, and all that she had to God, so she earnestly set herself to perform it to the last. At first she gave but the tenth of her income to the poor; but I quickly convinced her that God must not be stinted, but as all was his, so must all be used for him by his stewards, and of all we must give account; only in his appointed order we must use it, which is,

¹ Baxter himself was buried near the same spot. On Thursday, December 4, 1924, a Memorial Tablet to him affixed to the South wall of the Nave, was unveiled by Principal A. E. Garvie, D.D., as President of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches; and a sermon preached by Dr Henson, Bishop of Durham.

1. For our own natural necessities.
2. For public necessary good.
3. For the necessities of our children, and such Relations as are part of our charge.
4. And then for the godly poor.
5. And then for the common poor's necessities.
6. And lastly, for conveniences, but nothing for unuseful things'.

One of the conditions laid down by Baxter before their marriage was that he should not take any of her fortune—which worked out at less than £2,000—for his own use. Apparently, therefore, he made himself responsible for the regular household expenses, so leaving her free to do with her money what she liked. And what she liked we have partly seen. Her first concern was for what seemed to her 'public necessary good' in the shape of Chapels for Baxter. Then, having no children of her own, she turned to their poor relations, which meant her husband's, towards many of whom (he says) 'she was much more liberal than' himself: 'but her way was not to maintain them in idleness, but to take children and set them to some trade, or help them out of some special straits'. For the rest, she had a peculiarly keen regard to any worthy person in debt, or in prison for debt; and to distressed widows. But she was not very strict about their worthiness. 'Her judgment was, that we ought to give to everyone that asketh, if we have it.' Baxter at one time, thought the same; but had learnt from experience that 'we must exercise prudence in discerning the degree of need and worth. But she practised as she thought, and specially to them in prison for debt; and blamed me if I denied anyone'. In this way she used up her income and even mortgaged her capital, so that what she left at her death was not more than the half of what she possessed at her marriage. There were critical outsiders who murmured against her on this account and pitied her husband. To him, however, it was enough that thus she tried to do good. In her circumstances, self-giving could not be better expressed than by the giving of her money. Perhaps it is not a bad test even in an age of scientific philanthropy such as ours.

1 Cp. *B.*, pp. 48, 65.

To my worthy & beloved friends Richard Houghton
Esq, John Sumner Esq, Thomas Holly Esq, & the
rest of my friends

Whereas I have before my marriage chosen you
as my trustees for the securing and disposal of
my estate, Desiring you pay out 800 on an ac-
2) count for my life, & the rest after my death
to lay out for charitable uses, except I sig-
nified under my hand & seal that it should
be otherwise disposed of, I do hereby under
my hand & seal accordingly notify to you
that it is my desire & will, that the sum
of three hundred & fifty pounds be laid out
to purchase the lease of a house in Broad Street
in London now in the possession of remainder
of my money, being 800 shall be disposed of
otherwise than is appointed in the deed of trust
in such manner, and to such uses as I have
signified to my dear husband Richard
Baxter, to whom for the said uses I would
have it all delivered: Given under my
hand & seal this tenth
day of February 1670

in the presence of Margaret Baxter
William Baxter Robert prichard

~~Robert~~

Lytton woods

(2)

To my worthy and beloved friends Richard Hampden Esq, John Swinfen Esq, Thomas Foley Esq, and the rest of my trustees.

Wheras I have before my marriage chosen you as my Trustees for the securing and disposall of my estate, desiring you to layout 800*l* on an annuity for my life, and the rest after my death to layout for charitable uses, except I signified under my hand & seale that it should be otherwise disposed of. I do hereby under my hand & seale accordingly notifie to you, that it is my desire & will, that the reminder of my moneyes being 850 shall be disposed of otherwise than is appointed in the deed of

?9

Trust in such maner and to such uses as I have signified to my deare husband Richard Baxter to whom for the said uses I would have it all delivered.

Given under my
hand & seale this tenth
day of February 1670

in the presence of	Margarett Baxter
William Baxter	Robert Prichart
Lydae Woods.	

TRANSCRIPTION FROM THE PLATE FACING THIS PAGE
IN BAXTER'S HAND EXCEPT THE SIGNATURE.

Baxter enumerates some of his wife's faults, but not very impressively. He wished, I imagine, to evade a charge of idolatry. Her 'diseased fearfulness' was an infirmity but not a fault if, as he says, it was constitutional; and was aggravated time after time by some sixteen nerve-shaking events, or accidents. And, to a great extent, she rose above it under the influence of his happy religious faith.

'It being my judgment and constant practice to make those I teach, understand, that the Gospel is glad tidings of great joy; and that holiness lies especially in delighting in God, his Word, and works, and in his joyful praise, and hopes of Glory, and longing for, and seeking the Heavenly Jerusalem; and living as fruitfully to the Church and others, as we can do in this world: and that this must be wrought by the most believing apprehensions of God's goodness, as equal to his greatness, and of his great Love to mankind manifested in our Redemption, and by believing the Grace and riches of Christ, and the comforting office of the Holy Ghost, and studying daily God's promises and mercies, and our everlasting joys. And that Religion consists in doing God's commanding will, and quietly and joyfully trusting and resting in his promising and disposing will. And that fear and sorrow are but to remove impediments, and further all this. And this doctrine by degrees she drank in and so fully consented to that (though timorousness was her disease) her judgment was quieted and settled therein.'

Another of her faults sprang out of her sincerity.

'I scarce ever met', says Baxter, 'with a person that was abler to speak long, for matter and good language, without repetitions, even about religious things; and few that had more desire that it were well done; and yet she could not do it herself for fear of seeming to be guilty of ostentation.' She would not even pray in the Family. The utmost to which she could bring herself was to talk privately to the servants and read good books to them. Her husband tried to make her see that if even the sincerest preacher gave way to so scrupulous a dread of hypocrisy he would never preach at all; and she came to see this, and also to see that 'even an hypocrite, using but the words and outside of Religion, was better to others than silence and unprofitable omission'.

But, while passing no judgment on those who were quick to speak, she felt to the last that her own place was among the listeners.

A third fault was more real. 'She was apt when she set her mind and heart upon some good work which she counted *great*, or the welfare of some dear friend, to be too much pleased in her expectations and self-made promises of the success; and then almost overturned with trouble when they disappointed her. And she too impatiently bore unkindness from the friends that were most dear to her, or whom she had much obliged. Her will was set upon good, but her weakness could not bear the crossing or frustration of it.'

An exact portrait surely of a dreamer of fair dreams, with a confiding and sanguine soul, in a world of hard facts.

And a fourth fault was the venial one of a disproportioned sense of duty. Baxter says that he first understood Solomon's words, 'Be not righteous overmuch', by the exposition of her case. When she set herself to a duty she did so with such absolute devotion that she was often in danger of forgetting or sacrificing other duties no less, or more, important. Duties are no duties, he told her, when they will do more harm than good. And some of the work she took up as a duty and into which she threw her whole strength, did more harm than good—more harm to herself than good to others. He was thinking of the strain upon her head and body, of which she took no account. Her health should be her first concern—at least sometimes—for the sake of the very good she had at heart. She seems to have met this bit of common sense by turning the tables upon him: 'She thought I had done better to have written fewer books and to have done those few better'. 'She thought, too, I should have spent more time in religious exercise with her, my family and my neighbours, though I had written less.' To which his answer was that he considered his books his best means of service; and that the service he had in view called for frequent rather than well-finished writings. Apparently, neither convinced the other; but the swift flaming out of her life proved that he was right.

We may add some passages to illustrate more particularly what she was to him.

Thus, 'I am not ashamed' (he says) 'to have been much ruled by her prudent love in many things'. 'My constant pains and weakness and ministerial labours, forbad me the care of outward things. I had never much known worldly cares. Before I was married I had no need; afterwards she took the care on her, and disuse had made it intolerable to me. I feel now more of it than ever I did, when yet I have so little a way to go.'

'And as for her (I speak the truth) her apprehension of such things was so much quicker and more discerning than mine that, although I was naturally somewhat tenacious of my own conceptions, her reasons, and my experience, usually told me that she was in the right, and knew more than I. She would at the first hearing understand the matter better than I could do by many and long thoughts.'

'Yea, I will say that which they that believe me to be a liar will wonder at (that) *except in cases that require learning, and skill in Theological difficulties, she was better at resolving a case of conscience, than most divines that ever I knew in all my life.* I often put cases to her, which she suddenly so resolved as to convince me of some degree of oversight in my own resolution. Inso-much that of late years I confess that I was used to put all, save secret cases, to her, and hear what she could say. Abundance of difficulties were brought me, some about Restitution, some about injuries, some about references, some about vows, some about marriage-promises and many such like; and she would lay all the circumstances presently together, compare them, and give me a more exact resolution than I could do.'

'As to religion we were so perfectly of one mind, that I knew not that she differed from me in anyone point, or scarce a circumstance, except in the prudential management of what we were agreed in. She was like me for universal love of all true Christians, and against appropriating the Church to a party, and against censoriousness and partiality in religion. She was for acknowledging all that is of God in Conformists and Non-conformists. But she had much more reverence for the Elder Conformists than for most of the young ones, who ventured upon things which Dissenters had so much to say against, without weighing or understanding the reasons on both sides, merely following others for worldly ends, without a tender fear

of sinning. Especially if any young men of her own friends were inclined merely to swim with the stream, without due trial of the case, it greatly displeased her, and she thought hardly of them.'

'The nature of true Religion, holiness, obedience, and all duty to God and man was printed in her conceptions, in so distinct and clear a character as made her endeavours and expectations still look at greater exactness than I and such as I could reach. She was very desirous that we should all have lived in a constancy of devotion and a blameless innocency; and, in this respect, she was the meekest helper that I could have had in the world (that ever I was acquainted with). For I was apt to be over-careless in my speech, and too backward in my duty; and she was still endeavouring to bring me to greater wariness and strictness in both. If I carried it (as I was apt) with too much neglect of ceremony, or humble compliment to any, she would modestly tell me of it. If my very looks seemed not pleasant, she would have had me amend them (which my weak pained state of body undisposed me to do). If I forgot any week to catechize my servants and familiarly instruct them personally (besides my ordinary Family-duties) she was troubled at my remissness.' For 'she had an earnest desire of the conversion and salvation of her servants, and was greatly troubled that so many of them (though tolerable in their work) went away ignorant, or strange to true godliness, as they came; and such as were truly converted with us she loved as children'.

Lastly, 'though her spirits were so quick, and she so apt to be troubled at men's sin whom she much loved, she greatly differed from me in her bearing with them, and carriage towards them. My temper and judgment much led me to use my dependents, servants and friends according to the rule of Church-discipline; and if they heard not loving, private admonitions once, twice, and thrice, to speak to them more sharply, and then before others, and to turn them off if yet they would not amend. But her way was to oblige them all by the love, kindness and bounty that she was able, and to bear with them year after year while there was hope, and at last not to desert them, but still use them so as she thought was likeliest at least to keep them in a state of hope from the badness which

displacency might cause. I could not have borne with a son, I think, as she could do where her kindness was at her own choice; and yet she more disliked the least fault than I did, and was more desirous of their greatest innocency and exactness. Indeed, she was so much for calmness; deliberation, and doing nothing rashly, and in haste; and my condition and business, as well as temper made me do, and speak, much so suddenly, that she principally differed from me, and blamed me in this. Every considerable case and business she would have me take time to think much of before I did it, or speak, or resolved of anything. I knew the counsel was good for one that could stay, but not for one that must ride Post. I thought still that I had but a little time to live; I thought some considerable work still called for haste. I have these forty years been sensible of the sin of losing time. I could not spare an hour. I thought I could understand the matters in question as well at a few thoughts as in many days. And yet she (that had less work and more leisure, but) a far quicker apprehension than mine, was all for staying to consider, and against haste and eagerness in almost everything; and notwithstanding her overquick, and feeling temper, was all for mildness, calmness, gentleness, pleasingness and serenity'. What one feels in reading all this is not merely the high excellence of the character thus revealed but also the writer's deep humility. Baxter's love for his wife was a worshipful love. He thought of her as a being superior to himself, whom it was as much his privilege to follow in many things as his business to lead; and his one regret was that he proved less worthy of her love than he ought to have been. 'For though she oft said that, before she married me, she expected more sourness and unsuitableness than she found, yet I am sure that she found less zeal and holiness and strictness in all words and looks and duties, and less help for her soul, than she expected.'¹ So he fancied, but what would have been her answer, if she had lived to draw his portrait as he has drawn hers?

¹ Quotations are all from the *Breviate*. See App. 5

CHAPTER 6
BAXTER'S POOR KINDRED AND WILLIAM
BAXTER

BAXTER often speaks of his 'poor kindred'; and never with any hint of shame. He accepted them as a providential part of the claim which life made upon him and as a first charge upon his service. But they are for us somewhat of a difficulty. For we hardly know just where to place them in the family tree. There seems to be no room for them, at any rate, in the pedigree published by Rev W. G. D. Fletcher.¹ This, however, is confessedly incomplete. It does no more than make out the main descent from John Baxter of Bishop's Castle in the fifteenth century to which Baxter belonged; and, of course, there must have been branches from the main stock in the course of time. Some light on these is cast by what Mr Fletcher has also published—viz.:—the wills of a certain Edward Baxter and his widow Joyce, and their son Richard and his widow Elizabeth, as well as certain extracts from Parish Registers;² light enough to show that the Baxters were a fairly numerous clan and not confined to Eaton Constantine. Moreover, if Edward Baxter with his total fortune of £60 17s. was the richest of them—which seems likely—we may take it that poverty, more or less, was the right word for the condition of the rest. And on this point there is (happily) a revealing passage in the last of Baxter's writings.³ It is this:

'I was born but to five tenements of free-hold as my patrimony. Though I never took a farthing in my life of any of them for myself (having a multitude of poor kindred that must have *that*, and as much more as I can spare) yet for them I set all to Tenants that never offer to remove. The small Tenements I give them leases freely, and take little rent, and none of one. The biggest Tenement I let at £30 per annum which men say is worth £40 or near, and the Tenants are well contented.'

¹ See Vol. I, Appendix I.

² *Transactions of the Shropshire Archæological Society*, 1923, p. 145 ff.

³ *The Poor Husbandman's Advocate* . . . 1691.

Here he speaks of his poor kindred as a multitude; says that he has always given them all he got from his five little farms and as much more as he could spare; and that what he got from the largest of them was £30 a year, and from the rest as much or little as the tenants could pay. Thus Baxter was one of those rare landlords who practically let his tenants fix their own rents, which he handed over to his poor kindred.

While he was at Kidderminster we know that a large part of his income of nearly £100 (equal to £400 or more now) went in charities; and if (as we cannot doubt) he observed the rules which afterwards he prescribed for his wife's use, then much of his charity would certainly go to the same necessitous quarter. When his regular income ceased with his regular ministry, most of it, of course, had to be withdrawn. But Mrs Baxter, having no poor kindred of her own, adopted her husband's—nay, she went beyond him and was much more liberal to many of them than he was. This gives us the right point of view with regard to the following letter. The writer was Daniel Burgess the younger (1645–1713), made notorious for a moment, by the burning of his meeting house in Lincoln's Inn Fields (March 1711) by the Sacheverell mobs; but known for many years before then) to a limited public, as one of the raciest of London preachers. 'His style was full of epigram, terse, quaint, clear and never meaningless or dull'; and people talked of his 'pop-gun way of delivery'. A taste of his style is afforded by the first part of his letter which may be a good excuse for quoting it; but the second part is what concerns us. It tells of a Moses Baxter, once of Welshpool and now in Ireland; of his two brothers Aaron and Martin; of their claim to be Baxter's nephews; of Moses' daughter seeking aid from him for her father 'in distress', and not getting it, or even a hearing. Such is her story—told to the Countess of Lindsay, and by her to the Lady St John; and by the Lady St John to Burgess. Mention of the Countess instantly recalls the second Countess of Balcarres, but she had been the Countess of Argyle since 1671; and the letter must be of a date subsequent to 1685 when Burgess first settled in London.¹ Indeed,

¹ See *D.N.B.* The Countess in question was probably Jean, third wife of Colin (Lindsay), third Earl Balcarres, and son of Baxter's friend.

unless the letter was directed to Baxter in the King's Bench prison (which is very unlikely) its address was to Charterhouse Yard; and so of a date after February 1687. In this case Mrs Ruth Bushell, the housekeeper, may have played the dragon, and held off the importunate niece—especially if the old man was ill. Anyhow, it may be taken for certain either that, before the letter arrived, he had been unaware of the lady's visits, or, else, that he had conclusive reasons for not seeing her. That she and her father were really in distress, that they were really his poor kindred and deserving of relief, that he learnt this and refused to help, is unthinkable. One regrets (not for the first time) that his rule of not taking a copy of merely personal letters¹ has hindered us from a sight of his answer to Burgess.

'EXCELLENT SIR,—

'I bless God for your life, labours and tenderness. Particularly that which Mr Sylvester delivered to me but yesterday) and in which I have spent a good part of last night. I have want and will also, to consult you often; but leisure I have not) and so am fain to turn to the book when I cannot go to the author. Monday I water my Neophytes in an exercise; Tuesday, I visit and inquire into the state of the families of my Congregation; Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, I preach. Saturdays I lock myself up. Visits of pleasure, I make none—or, if any, it's but of one, viz.: heavenly Dr Bates, my humble) condescending, helpful friend; and a near neighbour of my nearest kindred; though, it's rarely, too, that I see even Hackney. Indeed, I sometimes send a troubled soul unto you. One, in tears, told me last night of balm received from you, since I saw you.

'But I exceed. This is said that my veneration of you may not be measured by the resources I make unto you.

'Now please, Sir, to know the Lady St John,² your true Honorer, prays me to furnish her with an answer to the Countess of Lindsey who tells her that you refuse to relieve or so

¹ Baxter says at the end of a letter to Sir Francis Nethersole [Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, if. 236^a] that it was his habit never to take a copy of any letter of his to others except theological letters to his brethren.

² Probably Joanna daughter of the Lord Chiefjustice Oliver St John by his first wife, who married Sir Walter St John his successor in the baronetcy (d. 1708).

much as see, a niece of yours who hath been at your door begging—viz.—a daughter of Moses Baxter that had two brothers, Aaron and Martin. The said Moses lived formerly near Welshpool, in Montgomeryshire—is now in Ireland in distress. He is, she saith, your nephew, and much still craveth to be admitted unto you. The Lady St John doth as much crave to hear from you whether you have refused to see this person, and, if so, whether you have not very good reason for so doing; and what it is she should say to stop the Countess's exclamation. In the afternoon I preach at Chelsey, where I shall see the Lady, and the Countess's kinswoman. I should be glad of two lines from you for answer to them. For the letter I received this morning the ill-written paper herewith sent:

"Sir,

"I am the neediest of your holy prayers on all accounts; and your most affectionate Honourer and Orator,

'D. BURGESS'."¹

Scarcely a scrap of information about the poor kindred has floated down to us, with one exception. This was William Baxter, usually described as his nephew but by Baxter himself as 'an Uncle's son's son'.²

By the time of his death in 1723 William had become a distinguished Archreologist; and in 1726 Rev Moses Williams published a volume of his *Reliquæ*³ prefaced by a very meagre fragment of Autobiography which tells nothing about himself except that he was born, in indigent circumstances, at 'the house of his maternal grandfather in Llanllugan, Montgomeryshire; that he let himself contract an ill-judged marriage—ill-judged because his wife, though amiable, was dowerless; and that he had spent nearly twenty years in teaching the young sons of London citizens with varying success.

For the rest, his chief concern is to stress the fact, or fancy, that the Baxters as a family were of aristocratic descent; that

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, f. 289^a.

² In letter to Earl of Powis, Baxter MSS. v, f. 208.

³ Contains besides the 'vita autoris' and a dedication to Bishop Small brooke, 'Glossarium Antiquitatum Romanarum,' 400 pp.; and four Letters, 15 pp.

his mother had noble blood in her veins; and that his wife's mother sprang from a knightly race, etc.

Of course, he felt some pride in his connection with the greatest of the Baxters, whom he calls his great-uncle; and describes him not un aptly as truly a man of keen intellect and great learning, and a wonderful power of extemporary speaking, and a zeal clearly apostolic, and a rare simplicity and unworldliness—which led scoffers to call him the 'canter' and drove him to identify himself with the Puritans,¹ although he had been ordained by the Bishop of Worcester.² To this he adds the bare statement that his great-uncle married Margaret, younger daughter of the illustrious (inclitus) Robert (?Francis) Charlton of Apley Castle; and, dying childless, made him his heir. He says nothing of his early years and of all he owed to the fostering care of Baxter and his wife. But, as a matter of fact, he seems to have owed everything to them, to Mrs Baxter especially. While still a child they took charge of him; directed his education and met the cost of it; advised him with regard to a profession; paid his apprenticeship fees; gave him a regular allowance for personal expenses—in a word, supported him till he was able to support himself, which was not till he attained, or nearly so, the age of thirty. All this is made clear by a series of letters preserved among the Baxter MSS. and all this was clear to William's memory, nor need his silence about this be taken as sure proof of a caddish ingratitude. Certainly he was grateful enough at the time.

There are thirteen letters and only three are precisely dated. So it is not easy to arrange them in due order. But, as all, except the last, belong to the period before Mrs Baxter's death in 1681; and, as there is some inner light here and there, the difficulty is lessened. One can at least be sure, in some cases; and from these derive degrees of certainty in others. It is, however, by no means my purpose to quote the whole. For this there is no space, nor is there any need. One or two, indeed, of Mrs Baxter's letters ought not to be curtailed; but, for the

¹ He says the Calvinists, as if these and Puritans were one and the same!

² If William meant to say that Baxter was no Puritan at the time of his ordination he ought to have known better. But it is true that, when he wrote, 'Puritan' beneficed clergymen were rare enough.

most part, extracts, or a summary, will suffice to bring out the pith of the letter—which is all that is necessary.

The first is one from Mrs Baxter to William at School—perhaps Harrow.¹

If so, no doubt she had placed him there. She writes to him as a studious youth, well advanced and of good promise spiritually as well as intellectually. The remarkable points are her great evident respect for his parents; and her own competence to advise him.

‘DEAR SIR,

‘You are deservedly dear to me both by the character that I have heard of you in your concernedness for soul-good and in your studious forwardness, as also upon the score of those great obligations which your worthy and greatly valued father and mother have laid upon me. At their request (though otherwise unfit for such an enterprise) I would make bold to offer you these directions which those who are with you may either rectify (if unfitly given) or if you judge it meet to communicate them to any. . . . It is not, neither will God account it, a sinful loss of time, or the neglect of soul-affairs, for you to spend more time in school-affairs than in retirement for sacred reading, contemplation or devotions; and if your parents and Master expect this from you they do no more, nor otherwise than what God approves of. Whence let me offer you these few articles of advice:

‘1. Be thorough in your Grammar as to Latin, Greek and Hebrew, etc. But I suppose your progress herein speaks it needless for me to insist any more thereupon.’

(She proceeds to name the best Grammars etc. in each.)

‘2. As to your Latin style you must read good authors and well observe them, and use yourself to speak and write it well.’

(Recommends Erasmus, Quintillian, Bandius; and, for Divinity, Calvin.)

‘Translate and re-translate your authors—then compare the translation with the original is her summary advice.

¹ He is said to have been at Harrow, but on inquiry I learn that the Registers of the period were destroyed by a fire before 1800; and it is rendered doubtful by William’s omission to mention it—a distinction so likely to please his conceit! If he did go, it would be during the Acton days (1663–9). He was born *cir.* 1650. Nichol’s *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. i, p. 163 note.

'3. Yet be not too severe in studying, but give nature its needful recreations, sustenances, and reposes. Lights should not swaile away, though you may burn them usefully: for you may easily spoil yourself in putting nature upon too great a force. But if you goad it your work will prove too tedious to reach, or forward, that proficiency which is desirable; and which you are aiming at (more I could say but that my time is short). The weakness of my own right hand forces me to use another scribe to whom I now dictate and by whose pen I now assure you that I am intimately yours in all fit bonds of service. 'Whilst I am.'¹

We shall not be wide of the mark if we suppose William to have been a youth of 16 to 18 at the date of this letter, i.e. it was written between 1666 and 1668.² The next five or six years are a blank. But we know, from a letter of 1676 that then, for three years, he had been in the position of a tutor to the only son of Sir John Bernard of Brampton, near Huntingdon; and it is probable that he went into teaching at once after leaving school. The following letter—dated February 13 without the year—is referred to 1676 by what it says about Baxter's Meeting-house in Oxenden-Street—which was built in 1675; and the P.S. discloses the first indication of the writer's wish to quit his teaching task.

'Feb. 13³ (1676)?

'HONOURED MADAM,

'I must no longer defer my thanks for your last kindness and great concernment for my welfare, of which I crave your acceptance, although but an inconsiderable part of the duty I owe you.

'I am informed that some, whose intentions were good, have done you a considerable injury. It goes about from one good family to another that Mr Baxter is in great straits. It may be supposed that a collection has been desired for him—by whom

¹ No signature. Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, ff. 172^{ab}–3^a.

² Nichols says he was 18 when he first went to Harrow, and knew not one letter in a book nor understood one word of any language but Welsh. No authority for the legend is given.

³ Baxter MSS. (Letters), vol. vi, f. 9^a.

it is hard for me to imagine, and upon what occasion. Only this I know that when, *the last year, a contribution was desired towards the great charges of building the meeting house,*¹ that occasion was left unmentioned to several; and the more prevailing argument of Mr Baxter's great necessities was made use of, which I told you not before because I knew how much it would trouble you, it being then over, besides. How mean a thing this is, and what an abuse of good Gentlemen's charity, it will but too plainly appear to you; and I was loath to represent it to himself, but leave to your discretion to use what means are possible for the redressing of it.

'I have been (I bless God) pretty well since I came down, my swelling abated soon without using the prescription. I shall not at present give you further trouble, but only beg my duty to Mr Baxter, my service to Mrs Vermuyden and Mrs Humphrey,² and rest, praying for your health and preservation. Your most obliged servant.

'W.B.'

'I mentioned the business of the law to Sir John, and he gives no encouragement at all to that nor anything else, at such a distance, after so many years already spent another way. For myself, I know not what mind to be of. I know I may well dwell here as long as I have a mind.'

We hear of a Mr Bernard, or Bernards, to whom Mrs Hanmer 'secretly conveyed' her children from the grasp of her brother-in-law, Robert Charlton, many years ago,³ but he lived in Essex and cannot be the Sir John Bernard, of Brampton, three miles S.W. of Huntingdon.

In another letter⁴ (a long one) dated March 14, 1676, addressed to Mrs Baxter as 'most honoured Madam', he lays bare his opinion of Sir John. He is reserved and exacting, 'naturally suspicious and apt to misconstrue'. He has met

¹ 1675. See *Supra*, p. 87.

² Mrs Vermuyden seems to have been Mrs Baxter's Lady companion. Mrs Humphrey, perhaps, was the wife of Baxter's friend Rev John Humphrey (1621–1719) Nonconformist minister in Boar's Head Yard, Petticoat Lane, White-chapel. He was the last survivor of the ejected ministers.

³ B., p. 2. ⁴ Baxter MSS. (Letters), iv, ff. 27^{ab}–28^b

William's announcement of a desire and design to leave him¹ with mild terms to his face, but is like enough to speak otherwise to Mr Baxter when he comes up (to London) which will be within a few days. He will probably say, as he writes, that 'he has laid a strong obligation upon me to serve him a seven years' apprenticeship and that Mr Baxter is considerably obliged to him for receiving me'. He will, also, insist, perhaps, that his boy has not been fairly dealt with, or that he stands to suffer by a change of tutors just when William has gained his confidence—though, as a matter of fact, the boy has 'often been encouraged against me and instructed to look upon me as his servant'. So, to counter this attitude he describes in detail what he has done for his pupil (evidently rather a dull and lazy youngster); what stage of progress he has reached; and what now may be the best course with him.

The next letter is dated in full, March 29, 1676;² and shows that, while William had made up his mind to leave Sir John, his choice of another profession was wavering between the ministry, law, and medicine. It is from Baxter; and summons him to swift decision, as between the law and medicine: for he is certainly not called to the ministry.

'William,

'After our expectations and delays I can hear of no encouragement for you to enter upon the ministry, unless you had that zeal and self-denial which would incline you to serve Christ upon the *hardest terms*; which I perceive not, and without which I think no man should be a Minister of Christ even in the most prosperous times.

'I desire you, therefore, to send me your resolution what calling you will choose. If you choose either a Lawyer or a Physician, I shall procure you a habitation in the house with one of the calling which you choose; and, if I die, I doubt not but my wife will see that you have a competent maintenance. Dr Ridgley is very desirous of you to dwell with him and will yield you his best help if that be your choice; but he must be

¹ Having been here, this midsummer following, three years.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), iii, 217^a. Endorsed 'For Mr William Baxter, at Sir John Bernard's house, at Brampton, nr. Huntingdon'.

soon resolved. He is a very learned, able, honest man. As you resolve, you must give notice to Sir John Bernard; and the sooner you can remove the better, because of your age which should lose no more time. If you remove from Sir John you may tell him that I think I can mention one to him that will do at least as well as you (either a grandchild of Mr Whateleys or Mr Bradford). Send me the fair copy of your grammar when you have transcribed it (but see the Oxford Grammar first).

‘Present my service to Sir John.

‘Your kinsman and friend,

‘RD. BAXTER.’

About the same time (whether a little before or after is not clear) Mrs Baxter wrote him a woman’s—nay, a mother’s letter—well suited to take off the somewhat acid flavour of her husband’s.

It is endorsed a letter to Will Baxter; is undated; and is in her own hand.²

‘COUSIN,

‘We have spent some time in considering what to advise in reference to your future studies and employment, but find no probability of your being a minister. For Conformity, you are against it; so are we. Therefore, let us look no more that way. For Nonconformity, were you a minister we should encourage you in it; but being free, we advise to choose it rather [neither?] unless we could give or promise you 300 or 400 pound a year that you might do good to bodies and souls both, and live and preach where there was need of you, and not where your needs must be considered, as is the case of too many already. Nonconformity has many difficulties, dangers and temptations attending it; now what we say of a minister may be said of a schoolmaster, besides that it is a laborious and low employment. Therefore, as we found you inclined when here to set yourself to some other study, we resolve to give all the encouragement we can in that way, and hope to make your abode as commodious and pleasant as will give you no cause to repent your choice. Its convenient you come as soon as Sir

¹ He was 26.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, 171^a, 170^b.

John will dismiss you; and we will have you in a lawyer's house without being obliged to any but your own business. But I must tell you—if you be wholly *indifferent*¹ as to law or physic—Mr Baxter and I could wish it were physic, because the learning you have has made you fitted for it, and Mr Baxter's name and fame for skill in physic will help you something. Besides, Mr Ridgley greatly desires your being with him; and his melancholy illness makes him care so little to go abroad that he would quickly encourage you to visit patients. But if you are not as freely willing to this as the other, you need make no scruple to say so, and resolve on the other; for *either* will content us well. And because you have lost all this time at Sir John's already, you shall have the better encouragement for the future; and as soon as you can prove yourself lawyer or physician you shall have all my share of the lands at Eaton (Constantine) which otherwise were mine as long as I live; and we can then (while my mother lives)² have [help?] considerably towards your maintenance without lessening our own—which I tell you of, lest the improbability of such supplies should discourage you, remembering what you have heard of our affairs, etc. We desire to hear when you will come and to which employment. I have no more, but with my service to Sir John and his Lady.

'Your truly affectionate cousin,

'M.B.'

This, and also Baxter's letter, would be crossed on the way by the following from William dated March 30.³

He had lately been on a visit to Vernon Row and the matter of his future was talked of, but the clear proposals made in the two letters just quoted were the product of a conversation between husband and wife after his departure.

Hence the note of despondency.

'MOST HONOURED MADAM,

'Having been long since out of hopes of becoming serviceable in the kind which in the beginning of my life I had pro-

¹ Neutral.

² She means Baxter's stepmother, living with them and by both called mother.

³ Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, f. 35^{ab}, endorsed 'For the Honoured Mrs Baxter at Vernon Row, in Bloomsbury Square, London',

posed of myself, I signified unto you when I was last to wait upon you, my willingness to begin a new course and, as it were, to sow in the time of harvest. Since my return hither so many discouragements represented themselves to me in the way I then designed for, that, being tired with the thoughts of it, I resolved to take comfort in the mercy of God towards me and to rejoice that through his Providence and your charity, it was so well with me rather than to concern myself because it was likely to be no better. As to what you please to propose to me, I might easily be won to such a studious life were there nothing desirable in it but the pleasure of the employment; and your encouragements are so great that I must profess myself, when I consider what a constant charge I have been to you all my life, more ashamed to accept of them than able to express the sense I have of so great a kindness. I cannot but be apprehensive how many years I am like to be an extreme burden to you, for so I must be if I ever aim at anything considerable in a profession where a man is so much considered by his outside and garb. I greatly esteem Dr Ridgley and had rather be with him than any other I know, only it would be some satisfaction to me to be *informed upon what terms you think it fit for me to be with him, and upon what considerations you conceive him to be willing of me*. I would be glad to be less scrupulous but my whole future life depending upon my present resolutions, I hope my curiosity will be the more excusable. . . .

‘From

‘Madam,

‘Your most obliged servant,

‘W.B.’

William’s anxiety to ascertain the terms of an engagement with Dr Ridgley was reasonable. So Mrs Baxter called upon him and then wrote:¹

‘COUSIN,

‘I went to Mr Ridgley, and I read there three or four lines in your letter and put him to answer the question, which he did

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, f. 235^a, 234^b. No date or endorsement, but in Mrs Baxter’s hand.

to this effect—that he needed and desired a companion and assistant in looking after his chemistry, and doing that which was not fit to be trusted with servants. Such work as was his own, but that business and illness made him need help. For that which was servile, he had a servant to do it. He should expect from you nothing that should be injurious to your studies; but—to use his own phrase—gratitude he expected, and then bade me advise you to read Hippocrates his oath. He, also, expected you to stay with him four or five years. Its not fit, he saith, for him to communicate his secrets to one that will presently be gone before he knows how to use them. Four years is necessary to be a student in physic; and so long he would have you stay with him. You shall have lodging in his house and such diet as himself, and such kindness and assistance as you desire, which he concludes will be considerable, having entertained a very good opinion of you. These are the Master's (?) terms, which we like well. If you do, and the time of your stay with him, we will allow you £20 a year for clothes and bye expenses (books you have besides); and, also, we will endeavour to make such acknowledgments of the master's kindness as may make you acceptable. If his death, or any other accident, should occasion your remove before you are fit and settled in business, we will take care whether we live or die, that you shall not want due encouragement, nor shall we upbraid you with being many years chargeable, but take kindly your compliance with us—in such an age, when many under as great obligations as yours, do not stick at fighting against those that gave them the weapons. I shall only add, as before, if your inclinations are more to Law than Physic we will give you the best assistance we can in that way.

‘The Lord direct you.

‘I remain,

‘Your loving Cousin,

‘M.B.’

William acknowledged this on April 30.¹ He has got Sir John's grudging and disdainful consent to his leaving at

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, f. 67^{ab}.

midsummer; he is sending off two ‘crazy trunks’ of his books by carrier; and, for the sake of the *éclat* it gives, he is going to matriculate at St John’s College, Cambridge.¹ . . . ‘Though I am not very fond myself of the honour of the University, yet because I know how incapable the far greater part is of judging of a person otherwise than as he is recommended to them by others, or by the fame of the place or society of which he is, I think I should not slight anything that may make for my advantages that is in itself no harm. I intend no more than to enter my name at St John’s College, having some acquaintance there. It is almost the first civil interrogation in all people’s mouths—Sir, of which University are you? and of what house? The answer to which advances one mightily in the opinions of such especially, as have neither ability nor opportunity to enquire further. To ease my hand, as soon as I might of cumbrance, I have sent up the few books I have here, in two crazy trunks and a deal box. I have directed them to Mr Baxter and they come to the Red Lion in Aldersgate Street on Wednesday night; I doubt they are too weighty for men’s backs. They will be a trouble to you. The carriage is here paid. And now I am again put in mind of renewing my thankfulness to you and Mr Baxter; and I cannot omit saying that, as I find myself happy and bound to give God thanks that I have such as you so deeply engaged for my good, so I wish for ability and opportunity of showing myself grateful. I shall but beg my service to Mrs Vermuyden and subscribe my duty to yourself and Mr Baxter.

‘I am, Madam,

‘Your very much obliged.

‘W.B.’

It appears from William’s next letter—dated May 15 and addressed to Mr Baxter—that Sir John Bernard has been ‘pleased to venture to say, and that to more than one (and perhaps insinuated something like it to you) that he imputed my folly (so he terms my new design and my leaving him) to some great desire of marrying’. After some general remarks on marriage he goes on: ‘As for my own particular (I speak it

¹ There is nothing in the Registers to show that he actually did.

not by way of boasting but compelled by you) I am far from engaged in, or inclined to, such folly as you mention, and I believe never shall be, being now I hope past a child'. He means to do his duty to the Doctor; if it be desirable, at the end of his four years engagement, to complete five or seven years, he will be ready to do so; he aims at neither pleasure, wealth nor fame, but only at quiet enjoyment of congenial work, of independence and of leisure to meditate on death and the better life. 'I add but the renewal of my thanks for your great kindness and my service to Mrs Baxter, Mrs Vermuyden, and Mr Ham(p)den if he be there. I am Sir,

'Your most obliged servant.

'W.B.'

Here we lose touch for more than three years. Then a letter from William to Mr Baxter at his house in Highgate—dated August 4, 1679,¹ discovers him at *Hitchin*, lodging (it would seem) with a Mrs Thelridge; and one of the masters in a private school. He is leaving at Michaelmas, much dissatisfied on several accounts; and says 'I want your advice how to dispose of myself next'. So far as he can see he is shut up to continued teaching, and he has a choice of the Free School at Huntingdon, or a much better one nearer London, or private tuition of a young Baronet (Lady Sadler's son, aged 17). But his desire is still towards a medical career. He has tried it, apparently, with Dr Ridgley; and, for reasons unnamed, has been checked. We gather from a reference to 'the great trouble and charge' he has been, that an excessive drain on the Baxter purse was one of the reasons. Yet, although now it seems out of the question, there is an implied appeal in his words. If he could but have his way and go again to lodge with some London apothecary he would rejoice to spend all the rest of his life in the study of physic. The letter closes with a characteristic touch of vanity to the effect, that he dare not think

¹ The change of address is rather perplexing; but we know that about August 1675 he was 'sold up'; that he appears then to have lived in one of the 'two little houses' which he built in front of the Chapel; and that the Chapel, at any rate, was taken off his hands by Dr Lloyd, Rector of St Martin's, about 1678. I suggest that the Baxters hereupon removed to Highgate until they could return to Bloomsbury.

of marrying ‘though I have had several considerable opportunities and encouragements’.¹

This, and something else in the letter and in another letter now lost, vexed Baxter; and drew forth a severely critical reply. We gather as much, from William’s somewhat haughty self-defence.² ‘I know none that thinks very much amiss of me but yourself; it should be a sign that either none knows me but you, or that you are most a stranger to me. However, I believe you will have much ado, by all your discouraging intimation, to make me think quite so meanly of myself as you seem to do, especially in your prognostics’. One suspects that he had been too much given to the gaieties of the Town; that he was too much of a lady’s man; that, therefore, he had not made the best of his opportunities; and that Baxter expressed the opinion that this augured badly for his future. William, however, claims to have been, and to be, quite steady and serious. His need is of encouragement and not reproof. He will close ‘with my Lady Sadler’ or (much preferably) return to London just as Baxter directs; and begs to hear on Saturday night by the Hitchen coach. It ‘comes by you on Saturday morning’. The close of the letter is meek enough. ‘I crave my humble service to Mrs Baxter and Mrs Vermuyden and your constant prayers for, Sir,

‘Your most grateful and obedient kinsman,

‘W.B.’

Perhaps by the same post he wrote, also, to Mrs. Baxter.³

‘MOST HONOURED MADAM,

‘Mr Baxter’s letter has made me very sensible to my mis-carriages in my last. I can only say that I erred unwittingly. Writing (I see) is a nicer thing than I thought, it being no less difficult than necessary to make a fair representation of the humour one is in when one writes. I intended to be pleasant, not smart; and it may be, it would have been so understood by

¹ Cf. William’s scrap of autobiography where he boasts of himself as ‘the very man who up to now (i.e. his marriage) . . . had resisted the most honourable conditions for my surrender’.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), i, f. 273^a, 274^a.

³ *Ibid.*, v, f. 241.

some that it would have more suited. Hon^d Madam, I must not undertake at present to express my sense of your renewed and redoubled kindness, only I cannot omit to say that I think it is more than any else, in such circumstances, would have done, in good nature for such a one as myself, and as much as should be done in discretion by any; and if it be lost, it will be by my own unpardonable fault. But I hope from time to time to give you those real assurances you have good reason to expect. . . .'

Obviously Mrs Baxter (having talked her husband over) had again come to the rescue; and William did return to London.¹ Two years afterwards (June 14, 1681) his honoured benefactress died, but by then he seems to have made good his footing as a Doctor; and, so far, to have gratified her hopes. In 1686 his 'great-uncle' could speak of him as a London Physician and a man of extraordinary learning. Two years later (June 5, 1688) when Baxter was settled in Charterhouse Yard, William was still within hail; and on that day received (and no doubt obeyed) the following behest:²

'WILLIAM,

'I desire you without delay to take two witnesses and read the subscribed lines to Mr Coxe and his Printers: but leave not the paper with them:—

"Mr Coxe, when you spoke to me about printing two of my books, *The Call* and my *Dying Thoughts* I told you I cannot consent nor have any hand in it: but if you first agree with me on terms securing me from detriment, and from your claim of any title to my copies, all that I could do was to forbear resistance, which the law and my propriety³ enable me to do. Since then I hear that you and some printers have got my *Paraphrase* licensed, and, also, have begun to print my *Dying Thoughts*, and tho' I have oft sent to you, will not come to me to give me security against your claim of the copies, which looketh so like a knavish design, that I do hereby forbid you

¹ Baxter writes of him as 'now Schoolmaster at Newington' (*An Historical Account of Apparitions and Witches*, p. 19), and the date is fixed by the fact that he wrote this before the death of the Earl of Orrery (1621–79), p. 20.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), iii, f. 219^a. ³ i.e. property.

and the printers to print or publish these or any books of mine, till you have given me security as aforesaid, which if you avoid, I doubt not but the Government will do me so much justice as shall make you repent of your knavery.

“If I have not your speedy satisfaction I shall seek a speedy remedy.

“RD. BAXTER.”

“June 5 1688.

Endorsed “For Mr William Baxter,
at Mr. Bradford’s in Blackfriars”.

This is the last of the letters; but that William and his ‘Uncle’ were in pretty frequent contact with each other is otherwise evident from the number of MSS. which the former copied out, or wrote at dictation. He was more or less his Uncle’s amanuensis and secretary; and a reader of the MSS. grows quite familiar with his open, flowing and spacious penmanship—curiously suggestive of the writer’s character.

One or two glimpses of him in another capacity—as a man about town—are supplied by Roger L’Estrange.

Thus, on Friday, July 7, 1682, there appeared the following in the *Observer*:

‘Mr Baxter’s nephew, yonder in Bloomsbury, was of another opinion yesterday at Gray’s Coffee House in Silver Street: for he declared that the thing was done already, and my Lord Mayor (said he) has more wit than to go to Guildhall tomorrow about it, or meddle any further in it.¹ . . . At the same time, “I wonder” (says he) “who shall stand in the Pillory with L’Estrange when he comes thither?” To which the irate censor made answer: “If the Law of the land had its free course, which had the better title to the place of execution, L’Estrange or Baxter? for whoever wounds my Lord Mayor in his authority, in this case, strikes the King himself through the sides of his Lieutenant, and, if he has eyes in his head, ’tis the thing he aims at”.’

So L’Estrange would make out William to be a Whig. In his 356th number, Wednesday, June 13, 1683—he would

¹ The Sheriffs had decided an election without the Lord Mayor, which L’Estrange exclaimed against as a sort of treason.

make him out also to be a diabolical liar, the very crime charged upon himself, with far more reason. The incident, however, serves to show that William, if not a pronounced Nonconformist, at this time, was not a friend of the clergy. It was to the effect that young Baxter had recited with gusto a 'Frolic,' sung 'T'other day' at a drunken club of Church of England Divines—eight or ten of them—who 'between Glass and Glass troll'd away the following song'—not to be quoted here. L'Estrange called the song the young man's own impudent composition;¹ and his pious soul was shocked at its profanity. But L'Estrange shocked at impiety, must have seemed too ridiculous; and it is more than likely that, for once, young Baxter had the laugh of him. At the same time, the young man's evident strain of levity suggests a reason why his 'uncle' should have warned him off the ministry.

After the latter's death in December 1691 William, his heir, came into possession of 'all his lands etc.' at Eaton Constantine; and, possibly, may have tried to live there. But his heart was in London, though not in his profession. Before 1691 he turned again to scholarship and teaching—won fame as an editor of Horace and an authority on Antiquarian lore; did twenty years' work as Master at Mercer's School, London; and died in harness.² So much is common knowledge, but what has been gleaned from the letters which passed between him and his early benefactors is now brought to light for the first time. William knew it himself—although he does not record or mention it; and may conceivably have been unwilling, or even ashamed, to acknowledge the generous care which sustained him in his struggling youth and gave him his chance in life. As there is no sure light on this point, charity bids us not to judge. But the story of their ungrudging and unstinting beneficence adds something to the lustre which shines about the heads of Baxter and his wife.

¹ He says it was the nephew who 'gave his uncle the itch of versifying'.

² See article in *D.N.B.* and references.

CHAPTER 7 (1678–1685)
THE POPISH PLOT

WE have traced Baxter's personal history to the end of 1684, but have said little of the national history which was transacting itself around him; nor is it my intention to dwell upon this. Baxter himself does not dwell upon it. The description of his autobiography as a narrative of his life and times is scarcely accurate. There is no connected narrative of his times—though there are many detached notes of events and persons which light them up, sometimes with a vividness not found elsewhere. Politics in the strict sense he ignored after 1662, except so far as they impinged directly on the state of religion and the Church. What he recorded, with care and fullness, was the course of ecclesiastical affairs; while other matters were set down, from time to time, on account of their connection with these, or of something in them which struck him as remarkable. And at length he dropped his pen, as a chronicler of events, in sheer despair:

'My unfitness' (he says) 'and the torrent of late matter here, stops me from proceeding to insert the History of this Age. It is done, and like to be done so copiously by others, that these shreds will be of small signification. Every year of late hath afforded matter for a volume of Lamentations. Only that Posterity may not be deluded by credulity, I shall truly tell them, that lying most impudently in Print, against the most notorious evidence of truth, in the rending of cruel malice against men of conscience, and the fear of God, is become so ordinary a trade as that its like, with men of experience, ere long to pass for a good conclusion—*Dictum Vel scriptum est (A Malignis) ergo falsum est*. Many of the malignant Clergy and Laity, especially *Le Strange* the Observer, and such others, do with so great confidence publish the most notorious falsehoods that I must confess it hath greatly depressed my esteem of most History, and of humane nature. If other Historians be like some of these times, their assertions whenever they speak of such as

they distaste, are to be read as *Hebrew*, backward; and are so far from signifying truth, that many for one are downright lies. Its no wonder perjury is grown so common when the most impudent lying hath so prepared the way'.¹

The date of this lament was about May 1679, just before that 26th of the month (when Charles's second Parliament was dissolved) which Macaulay calls 'a great day in our history': for on that day the Habeas Corpus Act received the Royal Assent; and the press became, for a short time,² free. The former prevented the commitment of Nonconformists, including Baxter, without trial; and the latter liberated a considerable number of his writings which had been, or would have been, suppressed. But also, in May 1679, the Popish terror attained the full height of its madness—though a discerning eye, even then, might have perceived that the public opinion was beginning to change. Had Baxter a discerning eye? The answer is doubtful. But it is not doubtful that, while not carried away by the torrent of popular passion, he gave entire credence to some of the popular beliefs. He believed that the Catholic creed bound the Catholic to own no authority whether of God or man except Rome. He believed, therefore, that every sincere Catholic must needs be a potential rebel against the King. He believed there were agents of Rome at work, especially Jesuits, who would stick at nothing to bring about their end. He believed that the Fire of London was their doing.³ He believed the weekly news which came to London that 'the Papists were gathering Horse and Arms, and that some of them had got troops, under pretence of the Militia or Volunteers to be ready for our defence'.⁴ He believed that the Dutch War (1670–4) was instigated by the French King, with the connivance of certain English Statesmen, if not Charles himself, to crush the Protestant Cause. He believed that the Duke of York was deep in their Counsels, and that the attempt of Parliament, in 1675, to purge the two Houses of Romish leaven by a special Oath, as well as, in 1679, to exclude the Duke from the throne, was justified. He believed, finally, that the miscreant, Titus Oates,

¹ R.B., III, 187.

³ R.B., III, 18.

² The Press Act was revived July 2, 1685.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

did expose a widespread Plot (October 1678), however enormous the crimes into which the Government, under the wild excitement fomented by his perfidies, let itself be driven. All this might be illustrated, point by point, by corresponding passages from his narrative. They disclose no new facts, and so need not be reproduced. But they show that Baxter was not superior to the almost universal obsession of his Protestant fellow-countrymen. For months and even years the fear of Popery, it is clear, was uppermost in his mind. Yet his fear did not stifle his humanity as it did in so many.

Just at the moment of fiercest panic this is what he wrote:

‘I unfeignedly declare, that I wish no cruelty against Papists, nor any hurt but what the necessary safety of those whom they would hurt requireth. But I must say that their canons and their writings and practices have had so much of these three properties—lying, malignity against good men, and hurtfulness and bloody cruelty—that the nature which God hath placed in me is no more reconcileable to it than to the life of highway robbers’.¹

And in the *Second Defence of ‘the Meer Nonconformists’*, 1681 (p. 19), he says: ‘As to his (Stillingfleet’s) note out of Mr Jo. Humphrie’s book, disclaiming cruelty to Papists, its known Mr Humphrey is a man of latitude and universal charity, and tieth himself to no party or any men’s opinions. He openly profeseth his hope of the salvation of many Heathens, and I so little fear the noise of the censorious that even now while the Plot doth render them most odious, I freely say:

1. That I would have Papists used like men, and to no worse than our own defence requireth.
2. That I would have no man put to death for being a Priest.
3. That I would have no writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, or any Law compel them to our Communion or Sacraments. For I would not give it them (if I knew them), if they came’.

This was his attitude to the last. Among the Baxter MSS. is a tract which he wrote two months before his death (October 1, 1691), under the title—

¹ General Preface to the *Second of the Nonconformists’ Pleas for Peace* (1680).

'*King James, his Abdication of the Crowne plainly proved. In compassion to a divided people, and of the conscientious part of those who, for want of due information, take him yet for their King*'.¹ It was an essay to prove, against the Nonjurors and their friends, that the King of an avowedly Protestant nation who showed himself actuated by Popish principles thereby (*ipso facto*) forfeited his right to the throne. Much abstract reasoning is advanced but the core is this:

'It is notorious that King James did strenuously endeavour to bring all the three Kingdoms under the foreign Jurisdiction of the Pope that he might be able to execute his professed religion. For . . .

1. Ireland he actually subjected to him by power.
2. He corresponded with the Pope by Embassies in order hereto.
3. He made a Jesuit and Papists his Privy Councillors
4. He made Papists, Judges.
5. And Justices of the Peace.
6. He made Papists the most trusted part of his Armies
7. And of his Navies.
8. He promoted Mass and Monasteries in the City.
9. He overthrew the Charters that he might be able to choose Parliament men.
10. He invaded the University Colleges for Papists.
11. He, having the power of choosing Bishops and Deacons, and making the Church of England, sought the extirpation, if not the death, of the most eminent Bishops that he might put his adopted instruments in their steads.
12. He oppressed the Nonconformists that he might force them to be for a universal toleration, that Papists might have public allowance.
13. He made men believe that his brother, King Charles II, died a Papist (and Huddleston that howselled him tells us that he approved of Popery long ago when he was his chamber fellow) that we might know that he was but perfecting an old design, but had not his brother's

¹ (Treatises) vii, if. 230^a–5^b. He adds—perhaps to mark his impartiality—'By one that never Sware allegiance to K(ing) J(ames) 2nd or K(ing) W(illiam) 3rd.'

patience to carry it on by degrees, but must push for it suddenly at once. So that there is no place for doubting whether King James endeavoured the subjecting of this kingdom to the Pope and the enabling of himself to execute his professed exterminating religion.'

In fine, the Prince of Orange did no more than seal a judgment which, by his radical breach of the constitution, James had already passed upon himself.

2

A FIERY TIME

The Popish question meant so much for Baxter, and he gives so much space to it, that we could not pass it by. But now the way is clear for a view of his last ordeal. As already said, the reaction from the Popish nightmare issued in a terrible time for the Nonconformists. Why it should have done, is something of a mystery. For the reaction was in favour of the Romanists and against their accusers. It might be described, therefore, as a Romish victory, and so a call for a closer approach to one another of all Protestants. But, at the same time, it disclosed the fact that Popery was not the imminent peril it had seemed to be. The Protestants had a sense of relief like that of two travellers in the dark who find that the Monster which they are sure is near, and ready to spring, is a fiction of their own disordered nerves; and, if they were quarrelling before the common fear drew them together, the vanishing of the fear might renew the quarrel. It was unlucky for the Nonconformists, moreover, that they were supposed, not without reason, to be closely bound up with the discredited Whigs who presently (May 1683) drew down upon them the lightning of public, as well as Parliamentary, wrath by the folly of the Rye House Plot to murder the King. On the other hand, the Church leaders were Tory, or Courtier, to a man; and swift to tax the Nonconformists with the criminal purpose of their allies. Baxter's experience illustrates this; and he cites an instance from the diocese of Exeter which is worth quoting because it proves that his experience was by no means singular. On October 2, 1683, a meeting of the Quarter Sessions, held at

the Castle, passed a series of Resolutions: (1) that in every division of this County, 'sufficient sureties for their abearing and peaceable behaviour' should be required of all persons suspected of attending any conventicles and unlawful meetings; (2) that all persons, possibly but not apparently open to suspicion, should be closely watched by the Churchwardens and Constables and be reported to the monthly meetings of the Session—such e.g. as might come to their Parish Church *occasionally*, but not behave in quite the orthodox way; or such as failed to receive the Sacrament three times a year; (3) that strict Warrants should be left in the hands of all Constables, in every parish of the County, to seize the Nonconformist Preachers as 'the authors and fomenters of the pestilent faction' by whom the late horrid Plot and the like execrable Treasons' had been brought to pass; and that these, together with the frequenters of their Conventicles should be prosecuted according to the law of 35 Elizabeth—entitled *an Act for the keeping of her Majesty's subjects in due obedience*.¹ A grant of 40s. was promised to officers or others for every Nonconformist Preacher whom he might bring to Justice. To crown all, as an act of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the late wonderful deliverance of 'our gracious King and his dearest brother', it was resolved finally—'with the advice and concurrence of the Right Reverend Father in God, our much Honoured and Worthy Lord Bishop'²—'to give and bestow for the beautifying of the Chapel in the Castle of Exeter and for the erecting of decent seats there, Ten Pounds'; and, further, to pay £6 yearly to any Clergyman of Exeter, whom the Bishop should nominate 'to read the Divine Service, with the Prayers lately appointed for the day of thanksgiving on the ninth of September last, and to preach a Sermon exhorting to obedience in the said Chapel on the first day of every general Quarter-Sessions of the Peace held in the said Castle, to begin precisely at Eight of the Clock in the morning'. This signal demonstration of Judicial loyalty and piety went forth under the blessing of the Bishop, who ordered and required all the Clergy of his Diocese deliberately

¹ This Act (levelled primarily at Roman Catholics) involved imprisonment or transportation or death for the first, second or third offence respectively.

² Lamplugh, once incumbent of St Martin's, see *supra*, p. 93.

to publish it, the next Sunday after it came to them.¹ The spirit here displayed was general. With reference to the same time (1683) Baxter writes:

‘The jails are filled with Nonconformists. Nine Ministers are now in Newgate, and many more in other places. And almost all of them mulct and fined in far more than ever they were worth. Their goods and books taken by distress. They are fain to fly or abscond that are not in Prison. Their wives and children in distress and want. They are judged by the Justices unworthy so much as to be summoned to answer for themselves before they are judged. . . . In a word, Lords, Knights and Clergymen take us for un-sufferable persons in the Land, unfit for humane society, enemies to monarchy, obedience and peace, and Corporations promise to choose such Parliament men as are for our extirpation. And all this is for our Nonconformity, which they all confess to be our duty, if it be any sin that by the impositions is required of us.’²

There was, at this time, no pity for the Nonconformists and even no law. A benevolent Conformist, e.g. Mr Robert Mayot, of Oxford, left £600 in his will to be distributed by Baxter, at his discretion, to sixty poor ejected Ministers—not (he said) because they were Nonconformists, but because many such were poor and pious. ‘But the King’s Attorney, *Sir Robert Sawyer*, sued for it in the Chancery; and the Lord Keeper *North* gave it all to the King.’³

Such malignant injustice stirred the soul of Baxter so deeply that his friends had great difficulty to restrain him from playing into the enemies’ hands, as he would have done if he had published what he felt and wrote. They said to him, if you publish it, ‘you must expect to do no good, nor so much as to be read

¹ Baxter prints it in his *English Nonconformity as under King Charles II and King James II* . . . 1689. Most of this book was written before September 28, 1683 (the date of the Preface), but was held back by the prudence of his friends. He brought it up to date, and inserted the Exeter document, just after the Revolution.

² *English Nonconformity under Charles II and James II*—Preface.

³ *R.B.*, III, 198. Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vi, ff. 1–2 has Baxter’s expostulation to Sawyer (April 26, 1684). William III restored the money, and Baxter duly carried out the bequest.

by adversaries, much less with diligence and impartial willingness to know the truth; but, contrarily, to be hated and accused of some odious crime and laid in Jail among malefactors till you die; and a Prison will be more grievous to one in your pain and languishing than to another'. To which he answered in the following elevated strain:

'My life and labours have been long vowed to God. He hath preserved my life and succeeded my labours above forty years by a continued course of remarkable Providence, beyond my own and other men's expectations. What he hath thus given me, is doubly due to his service; which hath been still so good to me that it hath *made even a painful life a continual pleasure*.¹ He never failed or forsook me: I dare not ask any longer life of him, but for more and longer service. And if my service be at an end, why not my life also? If I refuse his service, I invite God to cut off my life: and what service else can I do? I have neither leave nor strength to preach. I have these fourteen months been disabled so much as to go to any publick or private Church, or hear a sermon. My body with pain and languid feebleness is a daily heavy load to me. I suffer more by it every day, than from all my enemies in the world. And shall I be guilty of the heinous sin of the omission of my duty in a time of such urgent and crying necessity, to save so calamitous a life, which I am still looking when it endeth? Is not a Prison as near a way to Heaven as my own House? I will not do as those Christians that Cyprian writes to comfort, who were greatly troubled at death, because they died not by Martyrdom. But I take a death for so public and pressing a cause of truth, love, innocency and peace, to be a more comfortable sort of Martyrdom than theirs that were burnt in Smithfield for denying the Real Presence, and such like; and if God will so end such a painful life when sickness and natural decay is ready to end it, I hope he will teach me neither to repine nor to be utterly unthankful.'²

¹ Italics mine.

² Preface to *The English Nonconformity under Charles II and James II.*

3

ROGER L'ESTRANGE

Nevertheless he was persuaded to think that his best service, for the present, lay in patient waiting; and perhaps it was with the hope of making patience more easy that his friend, Mr John Humphrey, set him on paraphrasing the Epistle to the Romans.¹ At any rate, Baxter soon found the occupation so interesting that, when he had done Romans, he proceeded to paraphrase the rest of the New Testament—fitting ‘the whole by plainness to the use of ordinary families’. He expected some sharp censures on the score of his attitude to the book of the Revelations—an agnostic attitude, or, at least, one of uncertainty, with regard to certain difficult points on which he thought there was too much dogmatism. He came under the sharp censures, sure enough, especially those of Dr Henry More, whose kindly feeling turned to a (very surprising) acrid sourness. But it was not from the Apocalypse that the great storm swept up, so much as from other places of his Paraphrase where he had written incautiously. He could not, or would not, bear in mind that there were men ‘laying wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth that they might accuse him’. One of these, and the most alert was Roger L’Estrange, the story of whose relation to Baxter is not a digression.

Born a year later than Baxter (December 1616) he outlived him thirteen years (died 1704) and so, in the strictest sense, was his contemporary. But, though witnesses of the same great succession of events and actors on the same historic stage, they had nothing in common. Nay, no two men could have been more different in temperament, spirit and aim. Perhaps the only point of likeness might lie in an equal facility with the pen. Before 1660 they must have known each other by name, but there is no sign of any personal acquaintance. Then, in 1661, came the ‘Savoy Conference’, and Baxter’s *Petition for Peace* to the unbending Prelates. He wrote it as the mouthpiece of the Puritan side of the Conference: and instantly it brought up L’Estrange—whose ruling passion (to his honour) was a

¹ *R.B.*, III, 198.

loyalty to Church and King which (not to his honour) had no room for the least degree of compromise with a dissenting critic. Baxter had not signed the Petition; and L'Estrange, therefore, did not expressly mention him. Everybody, however, knew whom he meant when there came out (dated November 14) his tract of 85 pp., called *The relapsed Apostate or notes upon a Presbyterian pamphlet entitled a Petition for peace, etc., wherein the Faction and Design are laid as open as heart can wish*—with a dedicatory Epistle to the Presbyterian divines and abettors of the pamphlet. All the abusive libels on the so-called Presbyterians which so soon became prevalent are contained in this tract. It was more than anything else their *fons et origo*. Other tracts to the like effect which quickly followed incited Edward Bagshaw (1629–71), the young impetuous Independent, to cross swords with him; and, as he did so while defending Baxter against Morley, Bishop of Winchester, the result on the feeling of L'Estrange was not favourable to Baxter. Then, in August 1663, L'Estrange attained a position which gave free scope to his hostility. For he was appointed 'Surveyor of the imprimery', which meant (*inter alia*) that he was one of the licensers of the Press, and had the oversight of it. This helps to explain why Baxter could get a licence for none of his books on the Church-question—with one or two exceptions—for the next ten years or more. Thus in 1672, his *Second Admonition to Edward Bagshaw* (his former champion, but now his too violent critic), a book which, in part, sought to (vindicate the Nonconformist Ministers from the unjust imputations of Schismatic Principles', was as to that part suppressed by 'L'Estrange the Searcher'.¹ And in the same year, when Baxter had in hand a reply to the late Archbishop Bramhall's attack on his book, *The Grotian Religion Discovered* (1658), 'Mr Simmons, my bookseller' (says Baxter) 'came to me and told me that Roger L'Estrange, the overseer of the Printers, sent for him and told him that he heard I was answering Bishop Bramhall, and swore to him most vehemently that, if I did it, he would ruin him and me, and perhaps my life should be brought in question. And I perceived the Bookseller durst not print it, and so I was fain to cast it by'.²

¹ R.B., III, 89. ² *Ibid.*, 102.

With the suspension of the Press Act in May 1679 the gag was removed, and he could publish his *True and only way of Concord of all the Christian Churches*, but L'Estrange was in wait for him, and soon put out *The casuist uncased—in a Dialogue betwixt Richard and Baxter, with a Moderator between them for quietness sake*.¹ The point of this was that Baxter's writings, and particularly his latest one, were full of self-contradictions. He is for and against himself, as regards Toleration; Diocesan Prelacy, Liturgy and Ceremonies; Obedience to the higher Powers, etc. 'When the very oracle of that (the Non-conformist) interest comes to play fast and loose, and shift his conscience with the season, the masque is then taken off: for as there can be no denial of the Face, so there can be no excuse for the Hypocrisy'.²

In 1681 Baxter published his '*Third Defence of the Cause of Peace . . . against the accusations and storms*' (among others) 'of Mr Roger L'Estrange, Justice;' and on Wednesday, October 26, in the 65th No. of his *Observer*,³ L'Estrange, having repeated his former charge that the 'Peaceable' Petition (1661) for a reforming of the Common Prayer aimed at an utter abolition of it, he told this story. 'There was a captain of Horse in the King's service had the fortune to be wounded, dismounted, and stript in an encounter betwixt two garrisons of Rebels. A Chaplain to one of those garrisons comes to this Officer, and cuts off from about his neck a medal which the King had bestowed upon him; and which the soldiers themselves in the heat of blood had spared; and the gentleman was seven years a-getting of it again. I would fain know now what kin this Chaplain was to the *Good Samaritan* that poured oil into the wounds of the man in the Gospel—Luke x. 30—that fell among Thieves.' Next day (October 27) Baxter wrote down the facts in what he called an 'Antidote against Diabolism, or the scandall of Liars'.⁴

During his excursion from Coventry⁵ (in 1644) he stayed

¹ Second Edition, 1680.

² From the postscript.

³ No. 1 was issued on Wednesday, April 13, 1681. He was made J.P. for Middlesex in March 1680.

⁴ See *supra* p. 18, note 1.

⁵ *R.B.*, I, p. 45.

about two months at Longford Garrison, a mile and a half distant from Linshull, where his father had been imprisoned. 'In this time the soldiers on both sides, being within a mile and half, used once a week, to meet in a field between them to dare one another. And the King's Garrison (at Linshull) had lately got a famous Captain called Jennings. His old trade was a sowgawter. Thence, by use, he got to be a skilful fencer; and so got to be a Major at last, and, it seems by his medal, had someway merited of the King. But fencing serveth not among soldiers. The Longford soldiers charged them without art, and—the rest running away—Captain Jennings was hew'd down. But the soldiers were so unlike Papists that they would not kill him. I was all the while in the house about a mile off. When the soldiers came in, he that took the medal showed it me. It was but silver-gilt with the King and Queen's picture on. I gave him 18 pence for it, for no one would give him more. I kept it about 6 or 7 years; and, at Sir Thomas Rous's house, Mr Somerfield told me Jennings was well and his neighbour. I gave him the medal which I bought, and desired him to give it Major Jennings with my service (who never saw him). This is the truth and let the world judge of the Truth of Justice L'Estrange by this.'

Jennings lived at Wick, near Pershore—within easy reach of Kidderminster and Baxter. He, it appears, was responsible for the slander, but did not set it going till long afterwards. Baxter wrote to him on May 27, 1682, when (thanks to L'Estrange) it was in full career: 'Sir, I do not much wonder when I sent you the medal that you should imagine that it was I that took it from you. But, its sad that a man of your Age, so near another world as well as I, should so rashly publish so many falsehoods, as if you had been certain they were true. Do you not know that you never saw me (to my knowledge)? And could you, when so near death, know a man that you had never seen before? I protest I never saw you in my life, to my knowledge: never toucht you, never spake to you, never saw any touch or hurt you, nor was it in that Field, but in the next near Longford; and I bought the medal and in treated Mr Somerfield to give it you as from me, supposing it might be useful to you hereafter. Sir Thomas Rous's Chaplain that stood by, is

here, and will take my Oath of it, as I will do, that I never toucht you, nor spake with you, nor saw any do it. Repent, and God forgive you.'

Jenning's reply on June 9 shows that he had got his story pat. While he lay on the ground wounded a man on horseback came along with a man in black (reported to be Baxter by all the soldiers). The horseman ran him in the side, and then the man in black took off the medal saying, at the same time, that he was a Papist *Rogue*, and that the medal was his crucifix. To this he added that Baxter did not readily give up the medal. On the contrary, he did not give it up until persuaded by Mr Somerfield, who was the first to tell the Major that it was in Baxter's possession. It so happened that Mr Somerfield had Baxter's watch; and it was agreed that he should restore the watch only in exchange for the medal. To this Baxter was brought to consent and Mr Somerfield sent it to the Major by Mr Darby, of Fladbury. 'Witness my hand'—says the Major—'in the presence of John Clarke, Minister of Wick'.

Jennings was a tool of L'Estrange, who soon received a copy of both these letters and published them in *The Observer*, No. 165 (Wednesday, July 5); and asked 'Why will not Mr Baxter take his own advice and repent that God may forgive him?'

In the meantime he launched another slander—No. 96, Saturday, February 4, 1681-2—'how Baxter, "with five or six more of his own cloth and character" went to General Monck upon his coming up to London in 1659; and, finding a great deal of company with him, told his Excellency that he found his time was precious, and so would not trouble him with many words; but as they were of great weight so he hoped they would make an answerable impression upon him—I hear a report, Sir, that you have some thoughts of calling back the King; but it is my sense, and the sense of these Gentlemen with me, that 'tis a thing you ought not to do upon any terms, for prophaneness is so inseparable from the Royal Party that if ever ye bring the King back, the power of Godliness will most certainly depart from the Land'.¹

There are other Baxter references—such as the sneer at Mr Baxter's *Calendar of Saints* in No. 194, Wednesday, August

¹ See vol. i of this 'Life', p. 191.

23, 1682. But in No. 310, Thursday, March 29, 1683, there is much more than a reference. There is a long tirade—extending through the greater part of this and No. 34—against Baxter's last book, *Obedient Patience in general and in twenty particular cases* (1682)—a most Christian discussion of the theme 'Cross bearers less to be pitied than Cross makers' but hailed by L'Estrange as a bold and most unchristian libel against the King and the Church. He winds up his tirade with an answer to a supposed question: 'What is the matter, all this while, that you must needs fall so heavy upon Mr Baxter?' 'Why, truly, he writes often, and makes many occasions to call upon me and I upon him. And then he is so fair a mark that a man may hit him in the dark. But if you will know the very, very reason—my business is to lay open the fallacy and imposture of his pretences and designs. We need look no further than into this last piece for his character. And the scattering of his papers among the multitude is as dangerous as the laying of rats-bane up and down in a family, where there are many children. There's the bait laid, and if they swallow it, they'r poison'd; and if they do not swallow it the ratcatcher is mistaken: for 'twas lay'd on purpose for that end.'

The second series of the *Observer* (January 10, 1683/4–February 7, 1684/5) leaves Baxter alone, and the third (February 11, 1684/5–March 9, 1686/7) mentions him only once, but does so in a significant way. In No.8 (Wednesday, February 28, 1684/5) L'Estrange seems to excuse himself for his malicious handling of Baxter's lately published 'Paraphrase' on the plea that in publishing it he had broken some sort of 'truce'. What this was is not clear, unless his announcement in the first number—that he means 'not to inter-meddle in past controversies without fresh and public provocation'—be the truce, in which case it was more of a threat than a truce and manifestly one-sided. Anyhow, Baxter is declared in No.8 to have broken it. He is an incorrigible transgressor. He 'preaches a New Gospel in his *Paraphrase*', that is to say, he 'brings the four Evangelists and St Paul to subscribe to the divine rights of rebellion and schism'. The main scope of his book is 'to make broad signs to the People that they are under a persecuting and superstitious Government, and to propagate

the very same doctrine from the Press which the author of it throughout the whole course of his life has hitherto done from the Pulpit’.

This was on February 28.

But before this a letter reached him from Baxter. A copy of it, dated February 19, is among the Baxter MSS.¹ It begins: ‘The report of your displeasure against my Paraphrase on the New Testament and your prosecution of it, seemeth so strange to me that methinks if I were able (as I would) to wait on you and discuss it a little with you, I should sure give you satisfaction. But being by pain and weakness disabled, I can but send you these few lines instead of that fuller reason I would tender you.’ It appears from what follows that the Paraphrase had been in circulation long enough to excite the Separatists. They ‘have raised a clamour against it and say that I do in it plead for merits, justification by works, against retribution, for liturgy and imposed ceremonies, etc., especially that I have multiplyed arguments against the Pope’s being the Beast, and papal Rome, Babylon; and to prove it to be Pagan Rome. And they cry out that I am a Papist’. Baxter points to this as a reason for letting him alone. ‘How will you promote the rejoicing of these men, if you also condemn the book which they so accuse of Popery?’ Besides, what public interest will be served by its suppression? Not civil interest, for ‘it asserteth non-resistance (even) of heathen Governours’; not ecclesiastical interest, for ‘it asserteth three Sorts of Bishops (1) *Episcopus Gregis*, as *jure divino* in every Church;

(2) *Episcopus presbyterorum* when there are many Presbyters in one Church, as lawful *Jure ecclesiastico*, at least;

(3) Archbishops, as *jure divino* successors of the Apostles and other general Overseers. Foreign jurisdiction by the Pope it contradicteth; but pleadeth for love and peace in all men.’ ‘This book hath no word contrary to law or to the public peace. And they that read it will see that it justifieth itself’. Nevertheless, ‘if any so far mistake their interest as to think my reputation, liberty, or life a necessary sacrifice to it, God’s will be done (though I know how ill so lean a feast will be at last digested)’. ‘But, as I humbly entreat you to charge nothing on

1 (Letters), v, f. 38^{ab}.

the book which is not there, so also that you will deal mercifully with the poor afflicted widow who publisheth it;¹ and that you will not hinder that little help to the ignorant which I endeavoured with the best skill I had. Could I have done it better I would'. He adds, 'What you think there is erroneous in the book, if you please to notify it to me, I shall thankfully take it for a help to my repentance, and retract it if evidence convince me'.²

4

THE TRIAL

It was all in vain. He appealed to ears stopped by prejudice. Probably, also, the appeal came too late. Probably L'Estrange had already made out his charge; and set the law in motion, or rather set the Lord Chief Justice, Jeffreys, in motion. On the very day when L'Estrange printed his last invective in the *Observer*, this eminent disgracer of his high Office committed Baxter to King's Bench Prison. We have it on the sure word of Archbishop Tillotson that the frail old man had been summoned by Jeffreys to appear 'before him in his house' and that his treatment of him was such as to constrain 'his lady' (yet living) 'to desire him to be more fair'.³ If there had been no Habeas Corpus Act in force, Baxter, for all his Judge or L'Estrange cared, might have lain in prison till the day of his trial. As it was, he had liberty to spend some weeks in the country. 'On the 6th of May, which was the first Day of the Term, he appeared in Westminster Hall, and an Information was ordered to be drawn up against him. *May* the 14th, he pleaded not guilty to the Information. *May* the 18th, he being much indisposed, moved that he might have farther time given him for his trial, but it was denied him. He mov'd for it by his Counsel, but Jefferys cries out in a passion, *I will not give him a minute's time more to save his life. We have had (says he) to do with other sorts of persons, but now we have a saint to deal with; and I know how to deal with saints as well as sinners. Yonder*

¹ B. Simmons. This proves what I conjectured (vol. i, p. 161), that Nevil Simmons's business was carried on by his widow.

² The serenity and dignity of this long letter are very remarkable.

³ 'Mr Jacomb, as I remember, was by then'—adds the Archbishop.

(says he) stands Oates in the Pillory (as he actually did at that very time in the New Palace Yard), and he says he suffers for the Truth, and so says Baxter; but if Baxter did but stand on the other side of the pillory with him, I would say two of the greatest rogues and rascals in the Kingdom stood there. On May the 30th, in the afternoon he was brought to his trial, before the Lord Chief Justice Jefferys at Guildhall. Sir Henry Ashurst, who could not forsake his own and his father's friend, stood by him all the while. Mr Baxter came first into Court, and with all the marks of serenity and composure, waited for the coming of the Lord Chief Justice, who appeared quickly after, with great indignation in his face. He no sooner sate down, than a short cause was call'd and try'd: after which the Clerk began to read the title of another cause. *Tou blockhead you* (says Jefferys), *the next cause is between Richard Baxter and the King.* Upon which Mr Baxter's cause was call'd'.¹ I do not propose to relate details of the tragic farce which followed. They may be found in Calamy,² and more fully in Orme;³ while Macaulay's vivid narrative³ has become classical. But Jeffreys' charge to the Jury should be emphasized because of its political animus. It was not so much Baxter against the Bishops as Baxter against the King that the unjust Judge felt worth his while to stress. Truth did not matter; what mattered was to gull the Jury.

'Tis notoriously known' (says he) 'there has been a design to ruin the King and the Nation. The old game has been renewed. And this has been the main incendiary. He's as modest now as can be; but time was when no man was so ready at *Bind your Kings in chains and your Nobles in fetters of iron: and to your tents, O Israel.* Gentlemen, for God's sake don't let us be gull'd twice in an age.' When he had done Baxter asked him, does your Lordship think any Jury will pretend to pass a verdict upon me upon such a trial? 'I'll warrant you, Mr Baxter'—says he—'don't you trouble yourself about that.' The Judge knew his men. 'The Jury immediately laid their heads together at the Bar, and found him guilty.' As he left the Court, Baxter said to his Judge that a predecessor of his (Sir Matthew

¹ Calamy's *Life of Baxter*, vol. i, 368.

² *Life of Baxter*, pp. 364–70. Orme, however, quotes much from Calamy.

³ *History of England*, chap. iv.

Hale) 'had other thoughts of him':¹ upon which the bully replied 'that there was not an honest man in England but what took him for a great knave'. Some excuse for him may be found, perhaps, in the fact that the Court was full of Baxter's friends. His Counsel were friendly to him, as well as among the ablest and best of their profession. There was Sir Henry Ashurst standing resolutely by his side. There was Dr William Bates 'at his elbow'. There were many other brother Ministers 'in corners waiting to see what will become of their mighty Don'. There were conformist Clergymen ready to testify in his favour. There were women whom he called 'snivelling calves' when they wept for pity, and there was Sir Henry's coach at the door waiting to convey him home with every circumstance of sympathy and respect.

No wonder if such a man, with brain inflamed by brandy, let himself go.

But beyond this there is surely nothing which, on any reasonable ground, can be said for him. Baxter had prepared and delivered very full notes for his defence,² but the Judge would take no account of them, nor does he seem to have called any Counsel for the Crown. He made himself Counsel as well as Judge: and then left it for a packed Jury to say amen. The testimony of I.C.,³ professedly an eye-witness, has been questioned; but let the further testimony of Archbishop Tillotson support it: 'Nothing more honourable than when the Rev Baxter stood at bay, berogued, abused, despised; and never more great than then. Draw this well. (You will say, this will not be borne. It may, if well done; and if it will not be borne now, it will hereafter, and the time will come when it may and will be known). This is the noblest part of his life, and not that he might have been a bishop. The Apostle (2 Corinthians xi.), when he would glory, mentions his labours and strifes and bonds and imprisonments; his troubles, weariness, dangers,

¹ In his younger and struggling days Sir Matthew had befriended Jeffreys.
² Baxter MSS. (Treatises), i, ff. 2^a-13^b; vii, 215^a-219^a

³ It is printed in the *Christian Reformer*, January 1825, but there is a draft of it (sent to Mr Sylvester, June 2, 1694), among the Baxter MSS. (Letters), iii, 208-211. This was 'a rough copy' of the original formerly written to an 'Honoured old friend'.

reproaches; not his riches and coaches and honours and advantages. God lead us into this spirit and free us from the worldly one which we are apt to run into'.¹

Sentence was not pronounced till Monday, June 29, the first day of term,² and was light compared with that pronounced the same day on Dangerfield, one of Oates's tools, viz., that he should stand in the pillory before Westminster Gate the next day, and before the Exchange on Wednesday, and on Thursday be whipped from Aldgate to Newgate, and again from Newgate to Tyburn on Saturday. If he survived the torture he was, also, to pay a fine of £500 and find sureties for good behaviour for life. But the torture killed him. It was reported that Jeffreys would have had Baxter whipped in the same way, but was overruled by his colleagues. His sentence was that he should pay a fine of 500 marks;³ that he should lie in prison till it was paid; and that he should be bound to his good behaviour for seven years.

5

BETWEEN TRIAL AND SENTENCE

Why this comparatively lenient treatment? Was it due merely to the dictates of common human decency in the Judges? Partly, no doubt; but not merely. I am inclined to ascribe it rather to the influence of Baxter's own efforts in the weeks between his trial and the sentence. Something of what these were may be gathered from the following.

First of all—though the date is lacking—he appealed to the King.

To the King's most excellent
Majesty, the humble Petition of
Richard Baxter.

Most humbly shewing,

That your Petitioner, having lately written and caused to be

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, 76^{ab}, 77^b. It was written to Sylvester on February 3, 1691–2, and was in reply to one in which Sylvester consulted him as to the best way of writing Baxter's life. It is reprinted in the *Monthly Repository*, vol. xviii, pp. 203–205. See Appendix II.

² Trinity term?

³ A mark= 13s. 4d.

printed a book entitled a *Paraphrase with Notes on the New Testament*, an Information was thereupon exhibited in your Majesty's Court of King's Bench this last Term against your Petitioner, charging him that he meant, in some of his expositions and notes, to scandalize the Governours of the Church of England—which was far from not only the words but the meaning of your Petitioner. And the cause being tried by a common jury by *Nisi Prius* in a crowd of business, your Petitioner acknowledging the Book to be his, a verdict immediately passed against him without hearing his defence. Of which indeed the jury could not be supposed competent Judges, being matter of exposition of the sacred Scriptures.

That your Petitioner, having in that book quite otherwise explained his meaning and not spoken one word in all the book against the Church of England or the Governours thereof; and your Petitioner not meaning any scandall against them, but his exposition being evidently warrantable by the Text; and agreeable to the ancients, and commentaries the most approved by this Church, your Petitioner humbly casteth himself at your Majesty's feet, beseeching your Majesty to refer the matters accused to his Diocesan the Lord Bishop of London or any other of the Lord Bishops, as in your Princely wisdom you shall Judge meet, and to grant to your Petitioner liberty to attend them for their just satisfaction (if his great pain and weakness do not utterly disable him). And on their report your Petitioner doubteth not but your Majesty will find just cause to exercise your clemency to your Petitioner.

And as in duty bound he shall pray.¹

Phrase and form alike suggest that he wrote this under the direction of his lawyer. Then, when nothing came of it. Baxter wrote a second Petition in his own way, as follows:

'May it Please your Majesty,

Having been, after long bonds to the behaviour accused of sedition and injury to the Church and Clergy for certain words in a paraphrase of the New Testament, and found guilty by the verdict of a Jury without being heard in my owne defence, as if

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), vii, f. 1.

my meaning had been malicious against the Bishops, when I speak but of the quality of the sins of the Murderers of Christ, and the after Persecutors and Martyrs of his Church; and while I am mostly confined to my bed by constant pain and langour, I am expecting a sentence of further sufferings, and all this being done as for the interest of the Bishops and Clergy of this Church, I have given in to my Diocesan a full account of my innocency and the great mistakes of my accusers (supposing the case too long for your Majesty's perusal). And being past doubt that my suffering in this cause will be greatly injurious to the said Church and Clergy, for whom it is pretended, I humbly crave from your Majesty's favour that this cause and the true sense of my commentary may be tried by my Diocesan and such of his Clergy as he shall appoint (to whom I am said to be an enemy) before any sentence pass upon me.'¹

Baxter, it would seem, did not send this direct but enclosed it—together with the notes of his defence rejected by Jeffreys—in a letter to Compton, Bishop of London.

'MY LORD,

Being by Episcopal Ordination vowed to the sacred Ministry, and bound not to desert it, when by painful diseases and debility I waited for my change, I durst not spend my last days in idleness, and knew not how better to serve the Church than by writing a 'Paraphrase' to the use of the most ignorant, and the reconciling of doctrinal differences about texts variously expounded. Far was it from my design to reproach the Church or draw men from it, having therein pleaded for diocesans as successors of the Apostles over many Churches; though I confute the prevailing opinion which setteth them over but one Church, denying the parishes to be Churches. But some persons, offended—it is like—at some other passages in the book, have thought fit to say that I scandalized the Church of England and an information being exhibited in the King's Bench, at a trial before a common Jury, on my owning the book, they forthwith found me guilty without hearing my

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), iv, f. 316, rough draft in Baxter's hand, with two prudent erasures.

defence, and I have cause to expect a severe Judgment, the beginning of next term. All this is on a charge that my unquestionable words were meant by me to scandalize the Church, which I utterly deny. If God will have me end a painful weary life by such suffering, I hope I shall finish my course with joy; but my conscience commandeth me to value the Church's strength and honour before my life and I ought not to be silent under the scandal of suffering as an enemy to it. Nor would I have my sufferings increase men's prejudice against it. I have lived in its communion, and have conformed to as much as the Act of Uniformity obliged one in my condition; I have drawn multitudes into the Church and written to justify the Church and Ministry against separation, when the Paraphrase was in the Press:¹ and my displeasing writings (whose eagerness and faults I justify not) have been my pleadings for the healing of a divided people, and the strengthening of the Church by love and concord on possible terms. I owe satisfaction to you that are my diocesan, and therefore presume to send you a copy of the information against me, and my answer to the particular accusations;² humbly entreating you to spare so much time from your weighty business as to peruse them, or to refer them to be perused for your satisfaction. I would fain send with them one sheet (in vindication of my accused life and loyalty, and of positive proofs that I meant not to accuse the Church of England and of the danger of exposing the Clergy to charges of thoughts and meanings as prejudice shall conjecture),³ but for fear of displeasing you by length. For expositions of Scripture to be thus tried by juries, as often as they are but called seditious, is not the old way of managing Church differences; and of what consequence you will easily judge. If your Lordship be satisfied that I am no enemy to the Church, and that my punishment will not be for its interest, I hope you will vouchsafe to present my petition to his Majesty that my appeal to the Church may suspend the sentence till my Diocesan, or

¹ The reference is to 'Catholick Communion' defended against both extremes . . . 1684.

² This may be found in the Baxter MSS. (Treatises), I, fr. 2^a–18^b.

³ This sheet is printed in *R.B.* as Appendix viii, pp. 119–126—a comprehensive and illuminating statement.

whom his Majesty shall appoint, may hear me, and report their sense of the cause. By which your lordship will, I doubt not, many ways serve the welfare of the Church as well as

Oblige your languishing

Humble Servant.’¹

If Compton presented the petition it had no desired effect; and, as a last step, Baxter, on June 28 wrote to an unnamed peer (Lord Powis?) who, it appears, had already ‘condescended’ to speak for him. He goes over much the same ground as in the letter to Compton, and sends a copy of the same writings. Will his Lordship read these or, at least, the sum (omitting the long citations), and then, as he finds cause, tell ‘the Lord Chief Justice and my diocesan (to whom I presume not to expect access and audience)’ his own judgment of the case? But he stresses the fact that it is for the public good, not for his own sake, that he is most concerned.

‘The constancy of pain and the sentence of welcome death, put me past the fear of men; and if God will turn a death for my sin into a death by imprisonment for my faithful serving him; and that at 70 years of age, when I am past serving him actively any more, what greater mercy could I expect on earth?’ . . .

‘Sir’ (he concludes) ‘I have done my duty. I leave the rest to you and my other superiors; remaining, how weak soever, your fellow-servant; who hath no master above God, and no hope above his love and reward.

‘RI. BAXTER.’²

Surely the effect of all this in high quarters cannot have been nil, as regards his sentence or its execution.

6

IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE

For it is doubtful whether Baxter was at any time confined in the King’s Bench Jail. Certainly he was not there on Novem-

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, f. 246^b–247^a, no date or endorsement, a copy written in a very clear and educated hand.

² *Ibid.*, i, f. 32.

ber 17, when he received a visit from Matthew Henry,¹ the future commentator, but then a student of law in London, who found him in a private house attended by his own man and maid. On June 19, 1686, Rev Thomas Beverley, minister of Cutlers Hall, addressed a letter to him 'at the Patten Shop over against the King's Bench, Southwark', and desired him to command his servant to call on him for Baxter's papers.² The Patten Shop seems to have been his abode to the end; but is further described on a letter of some date in November as 'a Patent (?) Shop near the Blackamoor's Head over against the King's Bench Prison Gate'. The Blackamoor's Head was an ale-house close by, or next door to, Baxter's rooms; and the endorsement of another letter suggests that its tenant was one Francis Smith who (as we shall see) had dealings with Baxter not all quite above board. Here, then, at the Patent Shop he passed the next seventeen months. But before dwelling on his prison-life we may piece together the circumstances of his discharge.

On October 6, 1686, he wrote the following:

'To the King's most excellent Majesty
The Petition of Richard Baxter

Humbly Sheweth,

That your Petitioner being first 'bound to the behaviour near two years ago, by Justices—who publickely declared they had nothing against him, and did it not as a penalty for any fault—and not yet discharged of those bonds; and since, by a sentence of the King's Bench, judged to pay five hundred markes, and to give surety for the behaviour for some (seven?) years and to be imprisoned till this be done, which imprisonment he hath undergone since St Peter's day³ was twelvemonth.

He now, waiting for death under the great and constant pains of many diseases and decrepit age; and encouraged by your Majesty's example of clemency to others,⁴ humbly craveth that by that your clemency and compassion he may be discharged

1 1662–1714. Son of Philip Henry, who had asked him to call.

2 Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, f. 89^{ab}.

3 June 29.

4 See Calamy, *Life of Baxter*, p. 375.

from the said bonds and penalties, and may die in the just repute of being esteemed by your Majesty, as he is,

Your Majesty's loyal subject.'¹

If the Earl of Powis (1617–96) was the lord to whom Baxter wrote on June 23, 1685, he may have failed to help the latter's case because, at the time, it was hazardous to press his opinion on the King. But the situation had changed. James had need of the Nonconformists as a make-weight (if possible) against a recalcitrant Clergy; and his lordship took advantage of this change to urge the expediency, if not the justice, of conciliating the people whom he wished to win by the pardon of their most influential leader. If we ask why the Earl should care to interest himself, perhaps the answer is that he was a Catholic and so in favour with James; that Baxter was known to have written for the moderate treatment of Catholics and so likely to be in favour with Powis; that he was naturally a tolerant man; that he himself had suffered an unjust imprisonment of over five years in the Tower (October 1678–February 1684); and, not least, that, in a remote degree, he was related to Baxter through his wife.² Anyhow, it seems to have been at his instance that Baxter renewed his petition to the King; and, through his influence, that it was successful. But at this point, two or three others come on the scene—carrion birds, we may call them; and in particular, one David Williams, a Welshman. He was introduced to Baxter by Smith the landlord, and professed great sympathy with him in his sad lot, but exhorted him to be of good cheer. He (Williams) had the will and the means to serve him. He knew the Earl of Powis and other members of the Council and would leave no stone unturned. It was not a question of money. No, when Baxter asked what his fees would be, he waived the point. He looked not for stated sums—any gratuity which Baxter's gratitude might suggest would be

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatise), ii, 99, not in Baxter's hand but signed by him—and dictated?

² John de Charlton with the consent of Edward II married Hawise, sister and heiress of Griffith ap Owen, who owned property which included the district of Powys and so became the first Lord Powis. See p. 267 of *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, by J. M. Lloyd Thomas. Cp. also Owen and Blakeway's *History of Shrewsbury*, vol. i, 138, 160; vol. ii, 217, 218.

reward enough. Baxter felt doubtful of the man and asked nothing of him, but could not shake him off. The fact is, he and Smith had agreed to practise on his supposed simplicity. He was an old man with money, and not much wit in using it. His bad health made him doubly anxious to quit the bad climate of Southwark. Williams, if he managed the affair cleverly, might run up a big bill for pretended services; and be sure of getting it; and Smith, for a consideration, would back him up. So Williams set to work. Hearing of the suggested Petition, he hung round Lord Powis, with whom he had some sort of acquaintance, introduced himself as Baxter's friend and agent; wormed out of him hints of his mind as to what should be done; and then wrote to Baxter in this strain:

'MOST HONOURED AND WORTHY SIR,¹

'I have often attended the Right Honourable the Earl of Powis about your concern, and particularly this morning we have consulted and agreed that a Petition should be fairly written directed to the King and Council and to be presented to His Majesty next Wednesday by me on your behalf; and, also, there might be short petitions to other Noblemen who are privy Councillors to move for your enlargement and to second the Earl of Powis' motion, who hath moved his Majesty several times for you. I know who obstruct it all this while. I have prevailed with the Earl to offer to be bound for you for the future. Sir, I spare no time nor money to serve you faithfully. Therefore if you can possibly, this night, write any petition as you would have it to the King and Council and the Lords, I will get those transcribed by a scrivener, and will present them myself. The Earl will engage 6 or 7 Lords of the Council for you; and I will present Petitions to the Earl of Craven, the Earl of Berkley, the Dukes of Ormond and Beaufort. I have your Petition by me. I will wait on you to-morrow at 12 who am

Your humble Servant

DA. WILLIAMS.

Monday 3 of the Clock

I will leave no stone unturned to serve.'

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), V, f. 34.

The date (see last sentence but one) was before October 6. Next time, he writes all of a tremble with excitement and joy, because he had met Lord Powis last night and got his promise to have the business despatched by Monday or Tuesday.

‘If you knew my fidelity and the indefatigable care and pains I have taken for you every day this last six weeks.’ But, alas! he fears Baxter may turn out like the mariner who, in a storm, vowed a taper to the Virgin as high and big as the main mast, and when the storm was past thought ‘one of six in a pound’ would do! He hints at a fee of £ 100, if Ba⁴ter has a due sense of his desert. Two days later he writes again—in haste—to announce that he has actually seen the Warrant for Baxter’s release—it lacks nothing but the necessary signatures—he will bring it as soon as he possibly can.¹ But he has a grievance. He has found out that he is not the only intermediary employed by Baxter, who has sent some one else to my Lord—a painful sign of unmerited distrust. Whether Baxter believes it or not, it is true than none but himself could have prevailed with Lord Powis to carry the business through! And now he says plainly that he must have £100. The date of this was before October 25, when Baxter wrote to Lord Powis and said—while not accusing Mr Williams of anything, or wishing to be ungrateful to him—‘I am willinger to find myself bound in gratitude to his Majesty and your Lordship than to him. I have hitherto only given him £4 10s. towards the fees which he saith are necessary, the rest being yet unpaid. £3 10s. he saith, is Mr Squib’s fee for the warrant, and what to the crown officer and others I yet know not’. Baxter is evidently writing in answer to the Earl’s inquiry and is reticent. But two days later (October 27) he despatched such a letter to Williams as must have shown him that the old man was not the simple dupe he might seem to be. It begins:

‘MR WILLIAMS,

‘Though your unexpected letter surpriseth me, it is with no great admiration.² I know the world so well.’ Then he reminds him of his asseveration, at first, that he looked not for money; and adds, ‘My Lord of Powis saith you told him you desired not

1 Pure invention. 2 i.e. wonder.

one penny for your pains'. As to your complaint that 'my friend spake to Lord Powis without you, its an odds offence, when I could never get you to tell me where you lodged that I might send a Letter to you, nor know I how this will find you out'. 'Your talk of the seaman's vow falsely intimateth some promise of mine to you which I am breaking'; and with regard 'to your talk of six weeks labour, you shewed me your Petitions for others, as if *my* business had come in but on the by; and you first told me you doubted not to despatch it in three days without any great fees or charge. And, after that, you pretended but in two or three days more. And when I saw you began to entangle me in delays, and advised me to petition many Lords, I required you to meddle for me no more. And when, at your request, I permitted you to try once again, it was with this condition that you should try but once more, and with none but my Lord of Powis; and that you should do nothing more hereafter with any by-fees or solicitation without my consent. And this you said you showed my Lord of Powis'. In fine 'again I desire you to do no more for me, and yet I know not anything received from you. I sought not to you, but you to me'.¹

But a man like Williams was not easily done with. On November 30 (six days after Baxter was free of his fine) he wrote an impudent letter in which he declared that 'Mr Smith offered me his bond before witnesses for (your) £100 and that I should have £40 worth of books, nay, that I should be your heir, and this was offered before and since the business was done'. But this was bluff: for presently he drops into an almost pleading tone—begs that Baxter will say what in his conscience he judges him to deserve, and will direct his answer 'to be left with the porter at the Duke of Somerset's, at Northumberland House in the Strand, with as much speed as he can'.

Baxter did not answer; and on December 11—the first time for many weeks—Williams called on him. What passed is not told. But nine days later he sent in a detailed account of his alleged expenses on Baxter's behalf since September—an account which, with Baxter's pungent marginal comments—is

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), V, f. 108^a.

still extant'.¹ It is one of the most impudent and curious documents on record. Baxter at once sent it to Lord Powis, with this letter:

'RIGHT HONOURABLE,

'On December 20, I received this Bill from David Williams of £38 which he pretendeth that lowe him for his charge and labour, besides his claims of £100 for reward. I only at his own offer accepted his service to procure your Honor to present my Petition to the King; and I forbad him to do anything in my business without my own fore consent; and this I charged on him under my hand, requiring him to show it to you; which he said he did. He claimeth £24 and £5 for attending at Windsor, not telling, there or anywhere, anything that he did for me, but in generality.

I send you with it Mr Beresford's Bill that by it you may see that, under your Honor, all my business was done by others and not by Mr Williams. And if lowe him £138 I must proportionately owe others £300 who did so much more, which, with all my other fees to Courts and Officers and Marshall, will be much more than my remitted fine. I tell him that by your order I will refer all to your Honor to whom only I sent him; but by his Letter he saith he will refer it to no Lord in England but my Lord Chancellor. I perceive he intends a lawsuit; and I hear that a Jury will cast me as defendant, and give him damages merely because I employed him, and fixed not his hire. He giveth in no account of the £4 15s. which he received from me to pay Mr Squire and Mr Ward. To end my painful days in the troubles of a lawsuit, wherein I must use so many while I cannot stir myself, will be far more grievous to me than to have lain quietly in my prison. But God's will be done. I humbly crave your Honor's direction resting

Your greatly obliged servant,²

RI. BAXTER. *Dec.* 21, 1686.'

His Lordship replied the next day and repudiated Williams with sufficient emphasis:

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), IV, ff. 4111–12. See Appendix 9.

² *Ibid.* (Letters), III, f. 282.

'I do in the presence of God declare that Mr David Williams did not, as far as I know, in the least contribute to the release-ment of Mr Baxter, or that his application to me had the least effect upon me in order to the using my endeavours for his enlargement, nor was he of any other use to him, as far as I can understand, than only in saving of him as much as it would have cost him in penny post letters, and that he declared to me frankly that he was not to have anything but his labor for his pains only.

POWIS. 22 *December*, 1626.¹

Then on the 23rd his attorney Beresford wrote to him from Lincoln's Inn a final word:

'DEAR SIR,—

'Before the receipt of yours this morning I had been to wait upon my Lord Powys, who did tell me that Mr. Ashurst had been with him yesterday and that he had paid him the residue of your money. He did engage me to tell you that if you should give Williams one farthing more he would never forgive you . . . and that if Williams should give you the least further trouble he would summon him before the Lord Chief Justice² and that he would satisfy my Lord Chancellor, if there should be any occasion; and that he thought Williams had had too much already, saying, that he did nothing . . . but what might have been done by the Penny Post.' . . .³

We hear no more of Williams.⁴

On November 24, as said above, Baxter was released from his fine, but this of itself did not mean freedom. And it is evident from two letters of October 25 and November 17, the one to Earl Powis and the other to Attorney Beresford that for some weeks Baxter was in an anxious state of mind. In the former he raises several doubtful points. Will the whole

1 Baxter MSS. (Letters), III, f. 282^a.

2 Jeffreys, to wit.

3 Baxter MSS. (Letters), 96. Another letter from Beresford to Baxter, Dec. 1, 1686, warns him, also from Lord Powis, not by any means to part with his money to a Mr Pearsall who made charges upon him for visits to the Earl, etc., on his account. Baxter MSS. (Letters), IV, f. 202^a.

4 Except a short letter on Dec. 24 announcing his departure from Town and unwillingness to expose Baxter's reputation 'by course of Law' [(Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, f. 116^a).]

penalty be remitted, or is it intended to hamper him with some further bond? If so what is likely to be the sum, and will his own bond suffice? And the *Hicks Hall* bond of £400¹ will that remain? This question of bond was no trifling one. For he was resolved not again to involve any friend as his surety, unless he could pay him in case of forfeit; and yet, if he took up a new bond himself, it might entail his selling of the land he ‘was born to’ at Eaton Constantine. He has no other resources except the money realized by his London Houses ‘newly sold’—money enough to pay his debts and keep him ‘about two years’ if he ‘were like to live so long’. In which case there will be nothing for his heir. But why should his bond ever become forfeit? He supposes this question to be asked and answers, it will become forfeit if ‘I am but living within 5 miles of a corporation—which I am unable to avoid’; or if ‘but 5 persons come in upon me to visit me when I am praying with my servants’; or if I but speak or write in opposition to ‘the sanguinary and sharp laws against your Roman Catholics’. So the outlook is dark, unless he can somehow be secured beforehand. The letter to Beresford harps on the same string. He has been misinformed—‘as if from Sir John Babor’—that he was to be let off without bonds; then, that ‘an hundred pounds would serve’; and now (by Beresford), that ‘it must be two hundred (one for me and one for my sureties)’. He takes this for the last word; and writes ‘I will submit to £200 bond (for all that my sureties are bound in I am bound in who, in conscience, must indemnify them . . .)’. But beyond this he cannot go. Even this will absorb all he has or can get; and this, added to the Hicks Hall bond of £400 and a bond of £300 (or 500 marks) to the Marshall of the Kings Bench—‘to be a true prisoner and not to go out of the Rules’—means that he must stay where he is indefinitely. He dare not even obey the summons he has received to attend at a Judge’s Chamber somewhere out of the Rules, unless he is first secured from his bonds to the Marshall and Hicks Hall. Nor will a bare promise of safety secure him. The promiser may mean truly but what of others and the Courts of Justice?

1 i.e. Baber, see *Supra*, p. 98.

'It was publicly declared in Court against me on the Bench *That there is not an honest man in England that taketh me not for a knave*: and if every honest man in England so take me, it is like they will so use me.' But let the legal guarantee be given and Mr Beresford may tell the Earl that he will come to the Judge, 'though I am in danger of disappointing him when I have named the day, having few hours of so much ease as may enable me, and those few mostly in the night'. His guarantee was forthcoming, and his visit paid to the Judge during the next few days. The result was to clear him of his fine, but not of his bond, or bonds. According to Calamy, 'he gave sureties for his good behaviour, his Majesty declaring (for his satisfaction) that it should not in him be interpreted a Breach of the good behaviour for him to reside in London . . . and this was entered upon his Bail Piece i.e. the Parchment in which his Bail was given'.¹

7

WORK IN PRISON

Carlyle wound up his Rectorial address to the students of Edinburgh University with the words—'Work is the grand cure for all the maladies and miseries that ever beset mankind, honest work that you intend getting done'. These words have occurred to me often in connection with Baxter, and, most of all, in connection with his seventeen months of prison-life. His maladies and miseries were such as Carlyle knew little or nothing of. The 'foggy air' of Southwark which he had to breathe day and night intensified them. He was never at ease for more than a few hours together, mostly in the night. Yet the strongest man in his prime, working at the full stretch of his mind, could not have done more in those months than Baxter did. Work must have been an immense comfort to him for its own sake—a sweet oblivious antidote—while he was at it; and, of course, in his case, if not in Carlyle's, it was irradiated by his religion, his faith in a divine purpose for him, and a divine providence over him, which man's malice could not defeat, but only advance. There is not space to enlarge on his achievements, else a very interesting chapter could be added

¹ *Life of Baxter*, vol. i, p. 375.

to the history of Books written in prison. But it must be noted, as a thing hitherto unrealized, that by the light of Manuscript evidence we can see that his reading and the output of his pen were probably greater during these months than in any other equal period of his life.

1. Possibly the first work that engaged him was a ‘Defence of his Paraphrase of the New Testament for the just information of such as by mistake are offended at it.’ It covers ten very closely written folios¹ and is written in another hand than Baxter’s, at his dictation or, more likely, as a copy. There is no date, but it is hard to see where else than in prison it could have been written, unless during the month between his trial and sentence.

2. But if there is any doubt as to this, there is none as to the following:

‘A humble search into the sense of the Revelations.’ It consists (a) of remarks, trenchant but courteous, suggested by Dr Henry More’s *Mystery of Iniquity* (2nd Part); (b) a review of what others had written on the Apocalypse, or ‘historical premised notices’; (c) a ‘Paraphrase on the Revelation of St John the Divine’—totally different from his notes on it in the printed Paraphrase; (d) ‘Epilogue, giving the Reader a true account of this work.’ The whole work extends to 58 folios² and is described as Part first, without a hint of what would have made up the second Part. Most remarkable is the evidence supplied of the author’s endeavour to acquaint himself with every obtainable book on the subject, ancient and modern, Romanist and Protestant, before coming to his own conclusions. It was always his way to test or revise or expand his view of a matter by careful reference to what others had said; but I know of no finer example of his intellectual sincerity than this prison-study of the Apocalypse.

When one thinks how near Dr More was to Baxter in all the essentials and how friendly they had been to each other;³ it

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), i. ff. 81^a–86^{ab}.

² *Ibid.*, vii, ff. 244^a–302^{ab}, ‘written in prison’.

³ See More’s letters to Baxter—Feb. 10 and Sept. 25, 1681—in Baxter MSS. (Letters), iii, ff. 284^a, 286^a.

is a distressing reflection that the former should have found Baxter's modest agnostic attitude to the Apocalypse a sufficient reason for castigating him with a truculence worthy of L'Estrange. He held him up as one who did 'berogue' the Scriptures; a man of a wooden soul and stony heart; a malicious enemy of the Church of England, a leader of schism and rebellion. There is no doubt that *More* was moved to such weak and wild talk by vanity. He was more vain of what he regarded as his key to the mysteries of the Apocalypse than of all the really true and beautiful things he had written; and Baxter's scepticism wounded him to the quick. Unfortunately Baxter had to hurt him again by confessing that he did not understand another of his books on the Lord's Supper. So his magnanimity broke down altogether. But Baxter felt no anger, for two reasons: one was the news which reached him of the Doctor's 'failing of understanding'; and the other was his own humility. *More's* 'castigation' 'made me think it my duty to study the Revelation more seriously and searchingly than I had done before, lest I should wrong the Church'.

3. A third product of his industry was a MS. evidently meant for the press, since an address to the reader is dated May 16, 1690, but 'written in prison,' and occasioned, like 2, by Dr *More's* attack. As now extant, it is but a fragment of what it was meant to be or even (possibly) of what Baxter actually wrote and yet it runs to twenty seven folios.¹ It has a twofold title, or rather the second seems to be a sub-title to the first. The first runs. 'The State of Souls moderately examined,' i.e. the doctrine (under ten specified heads) of Origen, Lactantius, Joh(n), Jessenius, (a Jesuit) D. Paulus, Schalichius (alias Scaliger) Andr(ew) Osiander, Schwenkfeldius, divers German Fanatics, Dr Henry More, John Turner hospitaler in Southwark, Mr Tho. Beverley, Quirinus Kulliman a pretended prophet, Pet(er) Sterry etc.; written by the 'provocation of Dr H. More, and published by the provocation of Mr Th. Beverley.'

The sub-title is—'The doctrine of those men soberly weighed,' who teach that 'God is corporeal; and the second and third person in the Trinity are created universal life and body; and that God is the animated world; and this universal animated

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), iv, ff. 227^a–255^b.

body is the flesh and blood of Christ really present and eaten and drunken in the sacrament, and not his crucified body. Written to moderate between those that are in danger of such rash doctrines, and those who are apt to go from them too far, and censure them too hardly’.

Two points of interest may be noted.

(i) His unshaken confidence in that doctrine of the Trinity which he had opened ‘perhaps too copiously’ in the *Methodus Theologiae* and elsewhere.

(ii) His singling out of an obscure man for special distinction. Peter Sterry, ‘an excellent pious wit’ is an able advocate of some part of these strange doctrines. So is Lord Brook and Sir Henry Vane. But none comes up to ‘Mr John Turner, hospitaler at Thomas’s Southwark, son of Melchizedek Turner, late Fellow of Christs College in Cambridge who hath written many books with very notable wit. And though his interest and genius led him to revile Calvin and such others, I take him for a man of very deep study and beyond the common rank of wits. Having sharply written against the Master of his College, Dr Cudworth, as if he had written injuriously of the Trinity, he pretendeth to cure the common ignorance and error herein by thus opening the doctrine of the Trinity. I give his sense as near as I can without a tedious repetition of his words. He taketh God the Father to be the infinite immaterial Prime Cause, and the second person to be an eternal immaterial creature whom he calls the human soul of Christ, and the third Person to be universal pure created matter, animated by the first and second Person’.

4. The above three MSS. have never seen the light but the next (and last) two were more fortunate. On August 24, 1689, Baxter dated the preface to a small book which came out before the end of the year, i.e. March 25. It bore the title ‘Cain and Abel—Malignity—that is—Enmity to serious Godliness—that is—to an Holy and Heavenly State of Heart and Life . . . by Richard Baxter or *Gildas Salvianus*’. The first words of the Preface are these:

‘This reprehensive lamentation of English Malignity or hatred and scorn and persecution of serious Godliness by them who profess to believe in God and to be Christians, was

written in prison (but without any provoking sense of my suffering) in Anno 1685 or 1686.’

The last words are these:

‘It hath been cast by four years, at first because it would not be endured, and, after, in a vain hope that our Church Reformation would make such a complaint less necessary. But now I perceive the Devil will be the Devil, and Mankind will be born blind, sensual and malignant, till there be a new Heaven and Earth in which dwelleth Righteousness. Come, Lord Jesus.’

5 ‘Cain and Abel malignity’ was not a pleasant thing to write; but in a ‘Paraphrase of the Psalms’ he found delight. These old springs of spiritual experience were (he says) ‘so fitted to my use as if they had been purposely made for me. When I used not to sleep one minute in many nights, through pain and disturbance, these Psalms were my recreation’. He knew them by heart; and sang them night and morning with his wife while she lived; and sang them by himself, Sylvester tells us, to the end ‘when his sleep was intermitted or removed’; and ‘thought the Lord’s Day’s Service very defective without some considerable times being spent in this divine melodious exercise of singing Psalms’. One may imagine that the Paraphrase almost began itself in some wakeful hour at night; and then went on growing bit by bit in the same way till the whole was finished. By day he wrote it down and cleared up blemishes. His aim was to give the Hebrew sense; to avoid the harshness of strict Versions as well as the boldness of the more copious; and, finally when the thought of publication came into his mind, which it did not at first, to render it more suitable to common congregational worship¹ than the versions in use, viz. Sternhold and Hopkins, or Rous, or Barton. Baxter did not live to publish the book—though he left it fitted for the Press. It was published by Sylvester in the early Summer of 1692.

Such was the well or wells, which he dug in his Valley of Baca.²

¹ To this end he so adapted the second and fourth lines of a verse as to make it long or common measure at will.

² Ps. 84. 6.

CHAPTER 8
CHARTERHOUSE YARD 1687-1691

WHY did Baxter stay on where he was, through the winter months, breathing the unwholesome air of Southwark? Perhaps the answer lies partly in the fact that his money matters were not straightened out before December 22; and partly, perhaps, in the fact that he was too unwell to remove; or, even, not inclined to remove from the not uncomfortable rooms at the Patent Shop, to which he had grown accustomed, until the approach of Spring. Anyhow, it was not until February 28, 1686-7, that he removed to Charterhouse Yard, a comparatively open space, crossed by an avenue of trees, North-East of Smithfield and not far from his wife's grave in Christchurch, Newgate Street.

He appears to have occupied no separate house of his own but to have shared *Rutland House* with his friend Sylvester who 'had gotten it to be licensed for Preaching work': so, evidently, a large one. His housekeeper here, as for years past, was the worthy and faithful Mrs Bushel who attended him to the last. On March 18, the King made known to the Council his purpose to declare a general liberty of conscience to all persons of what Persuasion so ever; and did so on April 11. Baxter, therefore, after that date was free to preach; and may have entered at once into that co-partnership with Sylvester which he continued for the next four and a half years.

The arrangement was that he should assist Sylvester, i.e. that he should preach every Lord's Day in the morning, and every other Thursday morning at a weekly Lecture. It worked out, says Sylvester, 'to our great mutual satisfaction'. 'Never was there a greater harmony between colleagues', says Calamy. There was no jealousy on the part of Sylvester the poor preacher, or, at least, the preacher without 'elocution and expression', if Baxter filled the house which was otherwise almost empty. There was nothing but appreciative delight. Those Sunday morning services and Thursday Lectures for four and half years furnished a feast for mind and heart, such as he had never expected to enjoy; and remembered with abiding gratitude. It was there that he had full opportunity to

observe how 'properly, plainly, pertinently, and pathetically' Baxter could speak; and, no doubt, it was there that the occasion arose which brought home to him the Preacher's 'wonderful extemporate' faculty—an occasion when, 'having left his notes behind him, he was surprised into extemporate thoughts on Hebrews iv. 15'; and went on for the usual hour or so, just the same, or more effectively. 'When he came down from the Pulpit he asked me', says Sylvester, 'if I was not tired? I said, with what? He said, with this extemporate discourse. I told him that, had he not declared it, I believe none could have discovered it. His reply to this was, that he thought it very needful for a Minister to have a body of divinity in his head.'¹ For a short time before his death he lacked strength for the public preaching; but he still did what he could, by opening the doors of his House to all comers for family worship with him, till the very last days, when increasing weakness 'confin'd him to his chamber and at last to his bed'. He died on Tuesday morning, December 8, 1691, about four of the clock. The last agony seized him about eleven hours before—'a great trembling and coldness', which extorted 'strong cries for pity and redress from Heaven'. At last he said softly '*Death, death*' to Mrs Bushel who stood by; and turning his eye to Mr Sylvester, he said '*O I thank Him, I thank Him. The Lord teach you to die.*' There was no rapture of feeling or speech—any more than in the case of his wife. This is Sylvester's simple account. Other sayings ascribed to him at the end, were of an earlier date. More than once, when very ill and when his friend asked him how he did, his answer would be 'Almost well', or, when extremity of pain constrained him to pray for release he would check himself and say: '*It is not for me to prescribe; when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt*'. On the day, also, before his death he said to Dr Bates and Rev Increase Mather—'I have pain, there is no arguing against sense, but I have peace, I have peace'. Then came the night of agony; and the whisper of 'Death, death' as he passed from the deep darkness of a cold December dawn into the heavenly light. He was buried beside his wife in the chancel of Christ-church, Newgate Street, and 'a most numerous company of

¹ Sylvester's Funeral Sermon for Baxter at end of *R.B.*, p. 17.

all ranks and qualities and especially of Ministers some of whom were Conformists' attended the funeral to show their respect.¹

Is there no light on Baxter for the last five years of his life? There is little, or none, by way of narrative either from Baxter himself or from Sylvester; but, indirectly, there is some by way of letters, and two or three of his books, and one or two incidental notes.

A man of considerable consequence in state affairs with whom Baxter had had dealings now and then for twenty years was Sir John Baber. Professedly he was a friend to Baxter; but two extant letters to him from the latter suggest a doubt.² The first is dated October 20, 1687.³ It seems to be an answer to unnecessary, if not suspicious, inquiries as to Baxter's position. Baxter is on his guard; and, at the same time, plain spoken. ' . . . It hath been my suffering but is not much my shame that my heart has been so near my mouth and one end of my tongue been loose. But I consider

1. That you can tell what I said to you without describing it.
2. That I said to you but part of what I would say (especially for saving us from perfidious Juries and granting an appeal from two Romish Judges in case of life, estate and liberty to four Protestant Judges, and some necessities).⁴

3. That I have, 38 years, repented of my meddling in matters of public Government, and have sent my thanks to the University of Oxford⁵ for burning my political aphorisms, and am by resolution and age unfit to meddle with politics any more.

4. That I converse with few that can make use of my sentiments herein, but those few I deal as plainly with as I did with you.

1 Calamy, i, 403; Orme (405 note) quotes from Palmer (N.M.) the report of Dr Jabez Earl, a spectator of the funeral that 'the train of coaches reached from Merchant Taylors' Hall from whence the corpse was carried' to the Church.

2 See *D.N.B.*, where he is called 'a man of finesse'.

3 Baxter MSS. (Letters), i, f. 110.

4 He is thinking of his Trial and what he had said, or wished to say, to Sir John in order to prevent such injustice as he had suffered.

5 He did this in the Letter cited, *supra*, p. 98.

5. Gentlemen think us ministers such fools in Politics that they will disdain to be told by us so to do.

6. *Litera scripta Manet*, and I am uncertain when it is gone out of my hand, who shall see it and what use will be made of it, and, what offence it may give.

7. I abhor ingratitude to the K(ing), and my Lord of Powis for my present Liberty, but I find that I am not yet out of the fetters of my bonds to the behaviour, and, therefore, must not be presumptuous under the same power that I suffered by and am partly delivered by. And pardon me for saying, you that promised to take off my bonds have not performed it, and now only bid me *silence them*; and, therefore, sure, would not have me break them:

I say not *quia me vestigia terrent*: for I thank God that I honour Rulers in conscience to God, but dread them not for any worldly interest, which with me is almost at an end. I rest your

‘Obliged open hearted servant,

‘RI. BAXTER.’

The next has no date and is a copy—with ‘two or three words only altered and not the sense’.¹ A minority of the Nonconformists—Presbyterian, Independent, Quaker—were forward, or were induced, to approach the King with addresses of thanks, more or less adulatory, for his Indulgence.² Baxter, like most of the leaders of his party, held back. Sir John was surprised. Did not Baxter realize that he might be sure of the same grace from the King as some others? This apparently was the drift of Sir John’s letter to Baxter on finding his name absent from the subscribers to the late Presbyterian address. Here (with omissions) is Baxter’s pungent answer:

‘SIR,

The reason why I subscribed not the address was

(1) Because I never saw it, nor was it offered me. My brethren, knowing my weakness, I suppose, justly thought me unmeet for any such employment and met about it a mile or more from me. And now I am under £400 and £200 bonds for the behaviour, the first at Hick Hall the other before Judge

¹ Baxter MSS. v, f. 40.

² See Macaulay, *History of England*, ch. vii, 436–7 (popular edition).

Holloway. And I cannot return any thanks for our deliverance from the Act of Uniformity and many such other, which eject, silence, imprison and ruin us, without either expressing, or intimating, some blaming of those acts and of the Bishops and Justices that executed them. . . .

(2) I believe that the King would be against my punishment (now); and, that he was not for it then (June 1685) his Declaration seemeth to tell me. And yet I was near two years a prisoner or worse; and my cost over great, notwithstanding his Majesty's Gracious remission of my fine. The Judges will interpret the Laws and me as they have done.

(3) And my Nonconformity, lying mostly in an averseness to such oaths, subscriptions and covenants whose Truth I am unsatisfied of, its two to one but an imposed form of Address will have some word which I shall scruple and thereby offend; and what I should draw up may not satisfy others.

(4) I have these 35 years made love, concord and peace the main study of my life; and I dare not *now* violate it causelessly with the body of the conforming Clergy. And I have not skill enough to draw up an Address which shall neither displease his Majesty nor them. But silence in a dying man, methinks, should displease none.

(5) I have tried with two or three, whether they will concur if I should do it;¹ and they deny it, because they were not invited to the former address which already is offered in the name of the Prysbyterians; and they know not what *other* name to take, and will not, under the same, come with an after address, on many accounts. And I am not so vain as to make such an address *alone* as if I were so considerable a person.

Sir, These are the five reasons of your servant.

‘R.B.’

There is a MS. letter² (of date February 16, 1687/8) which tells us that when Baxter wrote the above he was but just recovering from a specially severe illness. Its writer was one of his oldest friends whom he met first at Bridgenorth, and again at Coventry, and with whom he had never lost touch—

¹ That is, himself draw up an address, distinct from the late ‘Presbyterian’ one.

² Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, f. 101.

Simon King, now an ejected minister living at Long Orton.¹ It begins,

‘DEAR FRIEND,

I was much refreshed at the news which my friend Mr Billing of Oundle brought concerning your continued life and abatement of your late great distemper, which reports here gave out to be irrecoverable. I much inquire, though seldom trouble and charge you with impertinent letters.’ After saying, as if in answer to a question, that ‘the Minister of our Parish is not the Th(omas) Carryer who was with me at Bridge-north’ but his youngest brother, Richard, he goes on: ‘—I did not show your letter to him because of some expressions too sharp, as I thought, against him in the same. But the book (viz. *Sacrilegious Desertion*, etc.) I sent to him with a letter humbly and earnestly desiring him seriously to read and consider the matter contained, and so let me know his further thoughts; and whether the sharpness of his conceptions against Dissenters was not somewhat allayed thereby. After three days, he sent it me again [(for I verily think he will not allow a book in his house against conformity to the Church of Eng-(and)l with a leaf turned down at page 18, 19; and with these words by the messenger, that he would fain see it proved that by our preaching we did more good than harm. The good Lord manifest it, for his own glory and the vindication of his sincere servants. What his heart is I know not; but his great argument is the law, the law of the land which dissenters break: which law, if it were disannulled by Parliament, as it is instigated by his Majesty’s declaration, it would stop his mouth if not change his heart. But this is God’s work alone, which I pray may be more powerful on his heart and mine also. He hath lately a Prebendship at Lincoln given him, £40 per annum. I envy it not. But I observe that since his dignifying he is more for Conformity. An instance is, that now in visitation of the sick, he plucks out a little common prayer-book; and only reads what is there prescribed, but formerly would pray without it, more fully and, to our apprehension, more affectio nately.

¹ 5 miles N.W. of Kettering.

My wife continueth healthful, employed at her wheel, and her book and prayer, constantly. She can't forget your harassing. Your *Saint's Rest* I think (is) every day in her hand. The Lord bring you and me and her with all that long after it, to full enjoyment of what by faith we have in hope, above our present conceptions.

As from our first acquaintance I am still yours beyond verbal expressions.

'S. KING.'

Another letter, which came to Charterhouse Yard in November 1687, was from one whom years before Baxter had introduced into the family of the later Earl of Orrery (better known as Lord Broghill). He writes from Harpford, near Honiton, Devon, where he was Minister, but still in correspondence with the Dowager Countess, who had given him Baxter's address. The occasion of the letter was a very deliberate suicide at Exeter by one Joseph Southmead who shot himself in his bedroom, after praying in his family as usual; and left a paper in which he quoted, as his justification, something by Baxter in the *Saint's Rest*, Chapter VII, § 6. The paper had been dispersed, and was creating a scandal; and the writer's purpose is to suggest that Baxter would be wise to vindicate himself in a short treatise. No one can do it better 'because your style is plain, your arguments cogent, your directions proper, and your writings taking with the generality of people'. If Baxter declined to meddle in the affair he would try to check the scandal in some other way but begs him to write. . . .

Sir,

Your very affectionate and much obliged friend and Servant

THO(MAS) MORRIS.

Harpford,

Nov. 1, 1687.

As we know, Baxter was too ill to write, even if he had the mind, which is doubtful.

Two or three days before this there came a letter which may conceivably have touched him to something of the joy of Jesus when 'certain Greeks' were eager to see him; and, over against the cold hostility of the Jews, he caught a vision of the

waiting human world outside. It was from Anthony Brunsen, a Lutheran pastor of Potsdam, in the electorate of Brandenburg—a Latin letter written on October 27, and inspired by gratitude for his writings. Gratitude had led him to translate and print one of them (which, he does not say) and this, with a portrait of the author prefixed, he enclosed.¹ A similar letter, still more warmly expressed, reached him in the following July. The writer's name was Peter Christopher Martin, a student of Theology at Dresden (in Saxony); and a student, especially of Baxter's books. Nor was he the only reader and admirer of them. He assures his venerable father that there are more of his countrymen who love him than he is aware of. He mentions seven and more of his books, which have been translated into German; and won their way to many hearts. His own indebtedness is great, and his affection likewise. 'Ego impense diligo te'.² Such a letter must have been refreshing—a cup of cold water at least—to its recipient; and even more so, perhaps, was a third letter of the same kind which came to him signed by eleven Students. Its date was October 5, 1690; and its address simply *aula Episc(opolis)*—which is the Latin for *Bishop's Hall*, the residence of Rev Thomas Brand, B.A., near Bethnal Green.³ Very laudatory is the strain of it; and Baxter might need to exercise some humility when he found these ardent neophytes saluting him as a promoter and pattern of piety, and, in doctrine, the choicest of expositors.⁴ Meanwhile, the King's obstinate folly was working out its due nemesis. All Protestants, or nine-tenths of the nation, were arrayed against him. The doctrine of non-resistance, which he counted upon as a sure pledge of loyalty at all costs, was in abeyance. For the safety of Church and State, high and low were prepared to welcome a deliverer in William of Orange. Baxter, in the seclusion of Charterhouse Yard, was away from the main stream; but he must have been one of the first in

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), i, ff. 113–14. ² *Ibid.*, vi, ff. 50^{ab}, 51^{ab}.

³ He conducted an Academy there; and the eleven students (Roger Griffis, Charles Owen, Robert Wood, Peter D'Alanda,* Francis Freeman,* William Hale, William Parsons, William Garret, Thomas Clark, Jabez Earle, Thomas Leavesley) were his pupils. Those marked * are known to have been Dissenters and probably the rest were. I owe this information to Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A.—the best of authorities.

⁴ Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, f. 46^a–47^a.

London to learn particulars of the Prince's landing, if (as may be presumed) the following letter was addressed to him:¹

DARTMOUTH,

November 6 (1688) Tuesday.

SIR,

Before this comes to your hand you will know that the Dutch fleet yesterday in the afternoon entered Torbay, consisting of 300 Sail, and immediately began to land the men at Brix(h)am Key, of which I have given an account, by several express, to the Secretary of State, to the Earl of Bath and the Sherifs of the County. And this evening have dispatch(ed) another to Whitehall giving an account of what was done last night; and this day there are landed 30,000 foot, 11,000 horse. The P(rince) of Orange is there in person, with many English grandees. One of his declarations was brought to me last night which I forward to the Secretary of State exp(ress). Dr Pryn an(d) Ferguson both preach this day, one in Brix(h)am and the other in the camp upon the hills neare Brix(h)am Key. 'Tis s(ai)d there are sixty sail of the fleet come safe to Torbay also, this day, which have on board 10,000 Sweeds, and that there are, in all, upward of 4,000 sail in Torbay. They report that they had advice before they came out of Holland that a squadron of your fleet had landed 12,000 men at Newcastle.

Here is no militia nor any force to withstand them in the country. A little time will tell what methods they will take. Some devise they will send about many of their flyboats and hoys for your security, which will give trouble.

JO. WILCOX?

P.S.—Just now a message from Brix(h)am brings me an account that some hundreds of them are marcht this afternoon for Newtown, and to-morrow intend for Exeter; that there are already 300 listed; that several of their vessels of artillery are sailed for Topsham Bar to land their cannon, all as near Exeter as they can; and that all this day they have been landing men and horse.

The letter is not endorsed, and we cannot be certain that it was meant for Baxter; but it is among his MSS. and must have

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), vi, 20^a. A copy of this Letter is in M.R. vol. 19, p. 451.

come under his eye very soon, and have evoked solemn thoughts of the Providence at work. Twenty-eight years before, Providence, so he thought, was conspicuous in the restoration of Charles II, and what a deluge of evils this had brought! Now the same Providence was banishing Charles's brother; and what would come of it? Baxter, I think, had grown too wise to venture on prophecy, but at any rate he had no doubt that the change of rulers was right. Otherwise would he have lent £100 to the new King or have written one of his last pamphlets to prove the abdication of the old?¹ Moreover, might not the change be the dawn of a bright day for the Church? Might not the promises made so emphatically by the Bishops, or in their name, during the days of trouble, be fulfilled? But here surely came his first disappointment. The promises were not kept. The new King asked Parliament to 'take away the necessity of receiving the Sacrament to make a man capable of having an office' and the House of Commons, with the approval of the Clergy, rejected the motion by a great majority—nay, rejected even a motion to admit to office a man certified to have received the Sacrament within a year, before or after his entrance.² When, too, at the King's instance, a measure for comprehension was brought forward—a measure which, properly handled, would (according to Calamy) in all probability, have brought in two thirds of the Dissenters, Convocation turned it down. Nor did many of the clergy do much more than yield a grudging assent to the 'Act for exempting their Majesties Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of certain laws'—the so-called Toleration Act—which received the Royal assent on May 24, 1689. This act, the effect of which was to legalise the status of Nonconformity and establish it outside the Church, dealt a death blow to Baxter's inveterate hope of one English Church, broad based on simple Christianity, and offering to outsiders the perpetual inducement to enter of a truly Christian spirit. He found the door as much closed, even against himself, in 1689 as in 1662. But at least the act lifted the fear of persecution and licensed the 'orthodox' to meet openly. Orthodoxy was determined by readiness to sign the

¹ See *supra*, p. 130–1.

² Calamy, i, 440.

39 Articles; and Baxter was known to have had scruples about some of them. Nay, it was known that he had often declared his opinion that a sufficient test of orthodoxy would be an avowed assent to the divine authority of the Scriptures.¹ There may have been whispers, or something louder, to this effect which reached Baxter; and decided him to be honest, as usual. He subscribed the Articles, but with explanatory notes stating in what sense he did so; and let his annotations be published (1689).²

Nobody ever need be in the dark as to *his* creed!

While Baxter was lamenting the failure of concord on a big scale in the shape of comprehension, there sprang up a doctrinal quarrel which soon wrecked a scheme of concord on a small scale. The quarrel was the old one about the meaning of free justifying grace, and owed its acute revival to the reprinting of Dr Crisp's Sermons;³ and Baxter, in his chronic dread of Antinomianism, must needs (intending water) pour oil on the fire. His friend Rev Francis Tallents (1629–1708) of Shrewsbury wrote to him on Wednesday, February 12, 1689/90; and begged him to refrain, or at least to treat the Crispians gently.⁴

'I am, troubled, Sir, at the new impression of Dr Crisp's books with the pompous show of names before it, and at the ill consequences that are like to follow it. Whether there be a need of your writing against it now, I do not know, since you have formerly done it so fully. But if you do, you will not, I hope, widen but lessen the differences all that may be, and take heed of putting many of our best divines, nay and the articles and Homilies of this Church amongst them. Many of the differences mentioned by divers, are about metaphysical notions and new hypotheses in Divinity, wherein eminent persons differ, yet hold the same thing. . . . And Dr Crisp, tho' he overlash and speak confusedly concerning Christ and Grace, seems not to design to oppose God and holiness, or subvert Christianity. A great fault has been, for about 20

¹ Actually the test substituted for the 39 Articles in 1779.

² They may be read in Calamy, i, pp. 469–76.

³ See vol. i, pp. 244–5.

⁴ Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, f. 125^a, 124^{ab}.

years, to incline to neglect Christ under pretence of exalting Reason and Goodness; and if, with grief, we have borne with many things in this, we ought to bear with something, also, that inclines to the other extreme. You are against imposing large confessions of faith and raising needless disputes. You will practise that now. And if you shall write (if out of zeal for the Church's good I may throw in my advice), pray write as little as may be, and only reject the greatest errors, and set out free grace as fully as may be; and, where there is need, refer to your former writings, and exasperate your adversaries as little as may be; and pardon the freedom from

'Your unfeigned friend and Servant in our Lord,

'F.T.'

This letter of good counsel may have influenced Baxter not to interpose at once; but it failed to hold his hand altogether. About a year later (January 1690/ I), during which the quarrel had been waxing, there came out a book of his in two parts—the first 'A Breviate of Fifty Controversies about Justification', written 13 years before; the second 'A Defence of Christ and Free Grace, against the subverters commonly called Antinomians or Libertines'—a small book of less than 200 pages (duodecimo) but of highly explosive effect, if we may judge from a single instance. In the first part, he had referred to 'the Erroneous and dangerous writings and Preachings' (among others) of a Mr Troughton. Now Mr Troughton was dead—dead at the age of 44, since August 1681. He was remembered, too, as a man blind for 40 years of his life, yet so keen for knowledge and so bravely persevering, that he made himself 'a good school-divine and meta-physician', a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, and a successful teacher. Baxter knew him as a child: for his parents and grandparents were hearers of his at Coventry (1642–5) and had consulted him about the boy's education. After this, there is no sign of any further acquaintance, but in 1676 Mr Troughton published a book of Antinomian tendency (probably the one called *Lutherus Redivivus*) in which Baxter (among others) was 'fiercely assaulted'.¹ The latter thought the book too weak to deserve

¹ This should be noted.

elaborate notice, but spent a scornful page or two upon it in the Preface to ‘the Scripture Gospel defended’ (i.e. the ‘Breviate’ just mentioned) which was written in 1677, *four years before Troughton’s death*. Baxter’s sad mistake lay in retaining these pages when the book came out in 1690—though the fact that he does not even hint at Troughton’s death more than suggests that he had not heard of it. But if so, he heard of it, with a shock, in a few weeks. For Mr Troughton had a son, of the same Christian name, educated by himself, and by this time (1690), like himself, a Nonconformist Minister—soon to become assistant, and then successor, to Rev Henry Norton of Bicester, his native place. From him came a very angry letter—headed ‘Clapham, March 12, 1690/1, too long to quote; but here are one or two of its fiery sentences.

‘You have by no means acted the part of a candid adversary by insulting over a man when he is dead—but it is not the first time you have digged men out of their graves to expose them’.¹

‘I daresay’ thus much, that the reputation which he hath gained in the University where he was educated, and in the place where he was preacher, hath set him above the little calumnies of a passionate reflector. The University had such a sense of his worth and abilities that if either promises or threats could have brought him to conformity he would not have wanted for the best encouragement. And his writings have met with no small acceptance from those who have exceeded Mr Baxter in learning. The want of your good word doth not diminish his credit, neither is his book the less valuable because it came not into the world with your licence’.

Towards the end the son’s natural if excessive heat cools down, and he bethinks himself that he may have gone too far. ‘If I have written anything that may seem to exceed the bounds of modesty, or of the respect that is due to a person of your

¹ The reference is obscure, but if it was to Edward Bagshaw and Dr Henry More it implies ignorance of the facts. Against both these Baxter was writing when he heard of their death and immediately held his hand, or expressed his regretful sorrow.

worth and character, I beg your pardon, since the duty and honour which lowe to the memory of my deceased Father hath extorted from me what I have written. I am sure I cannot propose a better example for imitation than what hath been set before me by him who lived in the practice of what he taught.

Yours to command in what I may,

JOHN TROUGHTON.¹

The Union of London Presbyterian and Independent Ministers which was born so auspiciously in 1690, and welcomed by Baxter in 1691 when he printed what he had written, to bring about a similar Union, as far back as 1655,² came to grief ere long, so far as London was concerned; and Troughton's case is a reminder that it came to grief, alas! partly in consequence of Baxter's book. None can doubt this who but glances through the contents, or reads what he calls the Postscript to its second part. But neither will he doubt Baxter's plea that he felt driven to write—not by the invective against himself in which the Crispians indulged themselves—but by his conviction of the vital issues at stake. There were other issues, by no means unimportant, on which his conscience might suffer him to keep silence but on the Antinomian issue, never. For the last time (if God will) he must as a speculator or watchman sound the trumpet to warn of 'the danger of the other Gospel that subverteth the Gospel of Christ'; and so secure at least this peace that the blood of the seduced 'will not be required at his hands'.

He wrote this on January 20, 1690. In the previous December he had issued another small treatise concerned with another controversy—the Millenarian—which had lately blazed up. Many Conformists as well as Nonconformists were on fire with it; and were (says Baxter) making belief in the Millennium a touchstone of orthodoxy—something 'essential to the Gospel

¹ B. MSS. (Letters) v, 57^a, 58^a. His writing is real Caligraphy for clearness. He was born at Bicester, Oxford (in 1666), whence his Father had been ejected in 1662 and where he himself succeeded Rev. Henry Cornish in 1698. He died in 1739.

² See Vol. I, 244.

and Christianity'. Dr Henry More was their leader, but their most zealous propagandist was Thomas Beverley (conformist Minister of Cutlers Hall) who loved Baxter; and longed to win him over, above all others, to his side. Again and again he had submitted to him his arguments; and found Baxter quite ready to listen, but quite unmoveable. At length he launched a 'challenge' to 'all the Doctors and Pastors of the Church'; and named Baxter in particular. Baxter met it in the Treatise just mentioned which he dedicated to Rev Increase Mather, president of the New England College, Harvard, then in London; and entitled 'The glorious Kingdom of Christ described and clearly vindicated' . . . Mather was an authority on the subject. 'I have read no man that hath handled it with so much learning and moderation as you have done; and therefore I know no man fitter, if I err, to detect my errors.'¹ As to Mr Beverley, his principles (twelve of them) are laid out, and laid by, with sharp decisiveness. But the poor hare-brained man returned to the charge; and so elicited from Baxter a second reply (dated February 20, 1690/1). Very brief and not without some of the sharpness which marked the first. It was meant to be his last word—the word of one 'passing to that world where we shall see face to face'. In this sense Beverley received it and spoke *his* last word in a beautiful letter of March 14 following. He sticks to his principles, and even reiterates the chief of them; but his first and last desire is to maintain with his venerated friend full unity of spirit. To this end he beseeches Baxter to pursue him no more in public, to pardon anything in the least unbecoming which he may have written, and to be assured that he himself will publish no more.

'You are to me more a father and a bishop than many nominal ones, ever since I read your *Saint's Everlasting Rest*, and read and re-read it before I had seen twenty years.'

'I should have great confusion upon me to have appeared as a dissenter from one I so much honour and love, and to whom

¹ A letter from Baxter addressed to Mather at Major Thompson's House, Newington, and dated August 3, 1691, is SUPPOSED to have been almost the last he wrote. See Orme's *Life of Baxter*, p. 766.

I am ready to say, "Bless me, O my father, before thou die".¹ Baxter's farewell to controversy arrived at length in April 1691. In March he published *A short discourse of National Churches; their description, institution, use, preservation, danger, maladies and cure: partly applied to England* (72 pp.)—a book of critical importance if one would learn his maturest ecclesiastical views. At the end of 'the Epistle to the Reader' he says:

'To them that will be offended with me for saying so much for Bishops and Archbishops, let them know that this book is but an attendant on a bigger, written against a Foreign Jurisdiction, or Popery, which showeth that I am no more for the extremes of others than of theirs.'

The bigger book followed in a few weeks under the title—*Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction which would be to England its perjury, Church-ruin, and slavery*. A design to link up the English Church with the Romish Church in general and particularly its French branch, on the basis of acknowledging the legislative authority of a general council of Bishops under the headship of the Pope—this was the object of his attack. At least since 1658, when he published his *Grotian Religion discovered*, he had been obsessed by the fear that the Church's prelatie leaders from Laud onwards were bent on such a design; and he was sure that the design had many supporters among the Bishops and higher Clergy in 1691. He thought it quite possible that, at the next Convocation (which seemed close at hand but which actually did not meet till 1700),² the design might be brought forward and win enough support to make it feasible. Hence his book—a book 'most of it written many years ago'; and lately finished, to meet the imminent danger. That the design and the danger were non-existent is difficult to conceive after looking through the mass of evidence which the book brings together. But, in the end, one's impression is that Baxter, very largely, was the victim of delusion, as he had been in his belief that the Quakers

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, 239^{ab}–40^a. There are twelve or more other letters ranging from April 12, 1686, which they wrote to each other. See note at end of this chapter.

² 10 February 1700–1, to be precise. The last was in 1689.

and other sects were controlled by disguised Jesuits; and one imagines that this may have been the impression, also, of Dr John Tillotson (not yet Archbishop of Canterbury but Dean of St Paul's) to whom he addressed the book—with an earnest request that, as probable Prolocutor of the Convocation, he would do his best to get the design censured.

It is pleasant to find that the very last words of the book, written on April 3, 1691, expressed grateful agreement with a former distinguished opponent, Dr Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester. Only four days before (March 30) he had protested, with some vehemence, against something of the Bishop's which he thought erroneous; but, in the interval, he has read his 'excellent Charge to his Clergy' and has come across some crumbs of concession which make him glad—nay, even incline him to hope that there may yet be 'such a further Reformation as may procure our Concord, or at last move our law-makers, so far to amend the Act of Uniformity as may procure it'. It is a curious and touching instance of the readiness with which Baxter welcomed any advance from the other side. Whatever his faults, a sullen or grudge-bearing temper was not one of them.

It has been mentioned that this book—'against a Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction'—though published in 1691, was for the most part written long before; and the same is true of nearly all the books which Baxter gave to the light after 1686. The year of their printing is apt to mislead. *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love compared* (1689) was written many years before; *Cain and Abel Malignity . . .* (1689) was written in prison; *The Christian Gospel defended* (1690), was written, as to its first part, mostly in 1677, and only its Postscript, with the much shorter second part, in 1690; *The English Nonconformity under King Charles II and James II* (1690) was nearly all written before 1683; *An End of doctrinal controversies . . .* (1690) was written in 1674;¹ *The Certainty of the world of Spirits* (1691) was a compilation which had long been on hand; and *Church Concord . . .* (1691) was, as to its first part, written in 1655, and as to its second in 1667.²

¹ *R.B.*, III, 192.

² The address to the Reader is dated Acton, Nov. 2, 1668.

In fact, the notion that his pen was as prolific as ever during his last years is unfounded. He seems to have done, and probably was unable to do, little more than revise, or finish off, old MSS. as occasion arose. But there is one exception. A month or so before his death he wrote the last lines of a small treatise which sprang red-hot from his heart. He wrote with a trembling hand and some failure of mental grasp; but there is no failure of life—the pure, keen life of a divine compassion and a holy indignation. For its theme is not anything theological or ecclesiastical, but the lot of those ‘Poor Husbandmen’ whose wrongs at the hands of a greedy land-owning class he knew so well. He called the Treatise¹—‘The Poor Husbandman’s advocate to Rich Racking Landlords—written in compassion especially of their Souls and of the Land—by Gildas Salvianns’; and the fact that this was his last written word invests it with a peculiar sacredness. In it we see how the old man of 76 was the ripe fulfilment of the young man of 30 who suddenly realized as he wrote of the *Saint’s Everlasting Rest* that his theology, to be of any value in the Master’s sight, must hold within it a perennial motive to that simple human kindness and justice which would win from him its crowning reward in the words ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’.

Though copied out for publication, this treatise has lain silent and unnoticed till lately, but is now made accessible to the few who will care to read it in the *Bulletin* of the Ryland’s Library (January 1926).²

NOTE to p. 178.

Beverley believed that the existing physical order would end in 1697; that the next stage would be the Millennial reign of Christ at Jerusalem; that this would correspond to the New Heaven and New Earth; that the thousand years would be succeeded by a terrific outburst of evil and its overthrow, i.e. Death, Hell and Satan would be cast into the Lake of Fire and that then would come the last Judgment.

On the other hand, Baxter seems to have believed that the Millennium

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), iii, ff. 154–71.

² Reprinted in separate form, price 2s. 6d.

was passed already, having begun with the establishment of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine; that whenever Christ might come—and to fix a time was presumption—His second advent will signalize His triumphant, complete and final victory; that it will be inaugurated by the general Judgment and the great Conflagration; that this will usher in the New Heaven and the New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; and that then Christ will subject himself to the Father, so that God may be all in all.

PART TWO

CHAPTER I
BAXTER'S NONCONFORMIST PLEAS FOR
PEACE (1679-81)

WHILST the Popish question agitated the public mind to the exclusion of almost every other interest; and, as we have seen, had a disturbing effect on Baxter's, it was not the question he thought of most. He viewed it in relation to another of far deeper moment. His fear that England might become Popish would have vanished if he could but have seen Protestant England united. What troubled him day and night was the spectacle of a house divided against itself; and, divided on matters lying far away from the central truths which all professed. We shall never understand Baxter unless we bear constantly in mind that this state of things was agony to him—the more so, because he felt so sure that if the wielders of power in Church and State—especially in the State—would but accept and carry out certain reasonable proposals, it might be remedied. But, as the years went by, the situation to his eyes grew worse and worse. All the evils which he had foreseen in 1661 were coming to pass.¹ On the one hand, the new clergy, fresh from the universities, found it pay to rail at the Nonconformists as everything bad; and were encouraged to do so by what they had been taught. Dr Thomas Good, for example, once (in 1653) a co-worker with Baxter in Shropshire for the effecting of concord between Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents, reappears (in 1673) as Master of Balliol, and the writer of a book in which he accuses the Presbyterian Nonconformists (meaning Baxter's party) as having thrown over the Church for 'things confessedly indifferent', i.e. for things which their own conscience pronounced sinless. Worse still, he declared that though 'all Nonconformists were not in actual arms against the King, nor did they all, as natural agents, cut off his head yet, morally, that is, very sinfully and wickedly, they had their hand stained with that 'Royal Blood'.² Baxter speaks of Good as a comparatively moderate man; and

¹ See his *Moral Prognostication*, published in 1680, but written in 1661 and laid by.

² See Baxter's letter to Good, Feb. 10, 1673-4. *R.B.* III, 148-51.

asks 'What may we expect from others when *Dr. Good* shall do thus?' In fact, others came forward in quick succession—like the 'Counterminer', Parker, L'Estrange—who set themselves to invade the younger mind of the Church, and thereby the ignorant laity, with a mass of malignant prejudice against all who stood outside. On the other hand, the sure result of such malice, added to the permanent injustice of the Clarendon code, was to intensify bitterness, to the highest degree, on the part of many Nonconformists—among the Independents especially—and to burn out of their hearts even the least desire for reconciliation.

Meanwhile, Baxter could do little more than look on. For anything he might write about the matter, or reasons, of his nonconformity was thrust back by the Censor. With the exception of his *Cure of Church Divisions* . . . (1670), which dealt, not with Nonconformity as such, but with its abuse by the Separatists; and his *Sacriligious Desertion of the Holy Ministry* . . . (1672) which was issued under the shelter of the 'Indulgence' and, even so, anonymously—with these exceptions, Baxter found no outlet. And yet he was blamed for his silence. As he says in one place, he and his fellows were like a man whose tongue had been cut out; and then had to hear themselves harangued on the necessity of speech. One day he met the Earl of Argyle, who told him that, 'being in company with some very great men, one of them said that he went once to hear Mr Baxter preach, and he said nothing but what might beseem the King's chapel; and concluded that it was his judgment that I ought to be *beaten with many stripes*, because it could not be through ignorance but mere *faction* that I conformed not'.¹

Thereupon he wrote for the Earl, 'The case of the Nonconformists in a brief History, and an index of about 40 or 50 of the points that we cannot conform to'; and permitted him to let it be seen by Dr Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln, who, though unusually well informed, seemed to be of the same opinion: for 'he could hear of nothing that we judged to be *sin*, but mere *inconveniences*'. On another occasion, Dr Gunning, Bishop of Ely, who certainly knew the truth about Baxter's position, had

¹ R.B. III, 186.

the effrontery to tell him that 'he would petition Authority to command us to give the reason of our Nonconformity and not thus keep up a schism and give no reason for it'; while the Bishop of London, Dr Compton, told him that 'the King took us to be not sincere, for not giving the reason of our dissent'.¹ It was in these circumstances that the expiration of the Press Act (May 1679) gave him a liberty of which he took instant advantage. First of all, he published a book—composed already and lying by him—which he called *The Nonconformist's Plea for Peace: or an Account of their Judgment in certain things in which they are misunderstood: written to reconcile and pacify such as, by mistaking them, hinder love and concord* (1679). In introducing it 'to the reverend conforming Clergy' he says: 'having forborne, for fear of offending them that require it, at last I have here adventured, not so far as to *urge the case*, but only to state it, and tell you barely what it is that I dare not do. If I find that you can bear this, and I have leave from God and man, I shall adventure on more, and give you my reasons . . . I write not this as accusing Conformists, or the Law makers, but as answering their loud and long accusations and demands'.

He anticipated that his 'unarmed' account (that is a statement without reasons) would be trampled on; and it was. 'It greatly offended many Conformists'. 'Dr Stillingfleet', he says, 'being made Dean of St Pauls, was put on as the most plausible writer to begin the assault against us, which he did in a printed sermon proving me and such others, Schismatics and Separatists'. The sermon was preached on May 2, 1680, and made a sensation. On the 26th Baxter replied to its main point in a private letter in order, if possible, to avoid a public dispute: for 'you have deserved so well of this land, especially for so stoutly opposing Popery at such a time, and are so much loved and valued by us all, that I would take the least provoking way. . . .'² The Dean replied, in an undated letter, and Baxter summed up the matters in controversy between them (June

¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

² There is a letter from Stillingfleet to Baxter (July 22, 1662) enclosing a copy of his *Origines Same* and owning benefit from his writings. Baxter MSS. (Letters), II, ff. 324–5. Addressed to Baxter at Dr. Micklethwaite's house in Little Brittain.

17, 1680) in a paper described as *An account of my Doctrine and Practice*. But this was not the end. Having collected his letters into a volume Baxter humbly tendered it to the Dean; to the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, and the Court of Aldermen; and to his Readers—‘the forum where we are accused’. Stillingfleet, on his side, published the sermon enlarged into a *Treatise* (1680); and this brought out ‘a second true Defence of the meer Nonconformists against the untrue Accusations, Reasonings and History of Dr Edward Stillingfleet, Dean of St Pauls . . . (1681)’.

Meanwhile, other and feebler opponents had come on the scene. About the same time appeared:

- (1) A book of Mr John Cheney’s, which Baxter answered in *The Defence of the Nonconformist’s Plea for Peace*, 1680.
- (2) Some old letters of Mr Hinckley to which he published an old answer he had cast by.
- (3) An attack by one called ‘Reflector or Speculum’, a second book of Mr Cheney’s, and Justice Roger L’Estrange’s ‘Dialogue’, all which, with some others, he answered together in a book called ‘*a third Defence of the Cause of Peace*, proving the need of our concord and the impossibility of it on the terms of the present impositions’ (1681).

But far better, for his purpose, than all such personal encounters was his attempt to expound the Nonconformist case as a whole, in ‘*the second part of the Nonconformist’s Plea for Peace*’ (1680). This, indeed, contained the essence of all he had to say, or ever did say, on the matter. The full title is sufficiently descriptive—‘Being an account of their Principles about Civil and Ecclesiastical Authority and Obedience (as far as the Author knoweth it) and about Things Indifferent and evil by Accident or Scandal: and what their Nonconformity is not; and whether the Ministers encourage Sects and Schism with their judgments and earnest desires of the Church’s Peace and Concord, and the true and necessary means’. ‘Mostly written many years past and now published to save our Lives and the Kingdom’s Peace, from the false and bloody Plotters who would, first, persuade the King and people that

the Protestants and particularly the Nonconformists are Presbyterians and Fanatics; and, next, that it was such Presbyterians that killed his father; and, next, that our Principles are rebellious; and, next, that we are plotting a rebellion and his death; and, lastly, that this is the genius of the Parliament, and therefore, that they and we must be used as enemies to the King.' The (historical) Preface of 22 pages is dated April 16, 1680, just about the time when the tide of popular opinion was beginning to turn in favour of the Court and its policy of absolutism. The book itself is made up of five papers written, some of them in 1668 and some later; but all before 1676, when four of them were printed, and the fifth (referred to in a postscript to the fourth as) ready for the press. They were printed without printer's or author's name, a significant fact, if we recall the fresh severities occasioned by the King's cancelling of his Licences in 1675. And this explains why, though printed, they did not get beyond the press. Baxter himself had been at the expense of the printing and was eager to run the risks of publishing. 'But' (says he) 'my prudent friends persuaded me to lay them by (though the printing cost dear), partly, as not sufficiently elaborate and accurate; and, partly, lest any defence (just then) should but exasperate our difficulties and occasion more wrath and unpeaceable writings'. When the four papers, along with the fifth, actually came out (1680) he feared that the book 'would have been but fuel to their malice'; but, to his surprise, nobody seemed to take any notice of it.¹ The book he meant for his weightiest 'plea' found no readers! And to a modern reader the reason is plain. For, considered as a book, it is formless, badly written, heavy in its matter, and without even the controversial sting of his other books. Hence, while those had some sort of a sale, this lay neglected. Nevertheless, it is well worth attention. In the first place, it reveals the great breadth of his *conformity*.

He did not, like the Separatists, profess and practise a wholesale revolt from the established Church. On the contrary, he came as near to it as he possibly could. He enumerates at least 40 things, anathema to the Separatist, which he found

¹ R.B., III, 188. See note at end of chapter.

tolerable, even when he did not heartily approve of them. Here are a few examples:

‘We are far from condemning all Forms of Prayer and Public Liturgies as unlawful . . . yea, we commonly use a stinted Liturgy ourselves, at least the Psalms said and sung. Nor do we think it unlawful to use much of the English Liturgy, and to join in the reverent and serious use of it with others.’

‘We find that even the old Nonconformists. . . many of them . . . not only used much, or most, of it themselves, but also persuaded to the use of it; and answered largely the Separatists’ arguments against such use. And we join with Mr Ball and others of them in thanking God that England hath a more reformed Liturgy than most of the Churches in the world; and we would not merely *seem* to use it when we do not, but do it . . . in the serious devotion and fervour of our souls. Nor would we peevishly make anything in it worse than it is, but would put the best construction on each part of it that true reason will justify or allow.’

Again, ‘Though we are not satisfied of the lawfulness of using the transient image of the Cross as a *Dedicating sign* and *symbol of Christianity* . . . yet we do not condemn *all use* of either Cross or Crucifix. Nor do we presume to reproach and dishonour the ancient Christians who, living among Pagans that dishonoured Christ crucified, did show them, by oft using this sign, that they were not ashamed of the Cross. And though we find that they use more rites and significant signs and ceremonies than we think they should have done, yet we judge it our duty to love and honour their memorial. Nor do we take all rites to be sinful that are significant.’

‘We hold not all the use of Images, even the Images of holy persons, to be unlawful. Many of us hold it lawful to communicate kneeling in the reception of the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ. We all hold that God must be orderly and decently worshipped with the body, as well as spiritually with the mind; and that reverent gestures and behaviour are fit, not only to *express* mental reverence to God but also to *excite it* in ourselves and others; and that such slovenly, rude, and indecent behaviour as seemeth to signify *prophaness* and

contempt, or to tempt others thereto, is no small sin, whatever men intend by it.'

'Many of us hold it lawful to keep anniversary Days of Thanksgiving as distinct from Fasts, in commemoration of the great mercies of God to His Church, by the holy doctrine, labour, miracles, lives and sufferings of the Apostles and most famous promoters of the Faith, so that superstition and prohibited creature-worship be sufficiently avoided.'

That is, he was not against the observance of saints' days. Nor are 'we against such sort of reading the sound parts of the Apocrypha, as we may do by other good books, sufficiently distinguished from other Scriptures, and used in due time and place'.

'We hold not a gown, or other mere distinctive garment for ministers, to be unlawful, in which, saith the canon, *no holiness is placed*, any more than to Judges, Lawyers, or Philosophers; and some of us hold a surplice rather to be used than the ministry forsaken; and those that think otherwise, think not the matter of so much weight as to alienate their love and communion with those that use it.'

In fine, 'our Nonconformity is not in holding that the Scriptures are a particular rule or determination of all the circumstances of Church-government or worship . . . but that nature and scripture give us sufficient general rules or laws for all such—so that they be done in unity, charity, edification, decently and orderly etc'.

He illustrates this by a list of twenty particulars in which 'we called Puritans and Nonconformists, do grant that it belongeth not to the Perfection of God's word to determine; but only to give general laws for determination'.

1. What day or hour (besides the Lord's Day) the Church shall meet.
2. Of what length readings, sermons, prayers and meetings shall be.
3. When and how often public fasts and thanksgiving are to be celebrated.
4. In what place the Church shall meet.
5. Of the convenient shape of the temples, ornaments, seats, bells, clocks, etc.

6. Of the place and shape of the pulpit, reading-place, font, table, etc.
7. Of the subject of the present sermon.
8. Of the method of the sermon.
9. Of the words of sermons and prayers and praises.
10. Of the using and not using sermon-notes, or other helps for memory.
11. What translation of the Scripture shall be used.
12. And what version of metre of the singing Psalms.
13. And what tune they shall be sung to, and with what melody.
14. What form or words of Catechism shall be used.
15. What comeliness shall be observed in vesture or habit, in public worship.
16. By what signs we shall profess our consent to the common faith and covenant—whether by standing up, or speaking, or writing, or holding up the hand, etc.
17. By what gestures in public worship, decency and order shall be showed and kept.
18. Of abundance of church-utensils in Baptism and the Lord's supper, fonts, vessels, cups, cloths, tables, etc.
19. Of circumstantial Officers and their offices, *circa sacra*, as Clerks, Church-wardens, door-keepers, etc.
20. When any of the people shall speak to the Assembly, and who; and when they shall be silent.

In this way, he marked the distance at which he stood from the strict Separatist who required express scripture warrant for everything in the worship, as well as the creed of the Church.¹ Thus he was a 'Meer Nonconformist', that is, as little of a Nonconformist as he could be. His aim and desire had ever been to emphasize the measure of his agreement with the church, and to make the best of that in which he disagreed with her. But, all the same, his Nonconformity was real. It was real by reason of a conscience which forbade him to declare, on oath, his assent and consent to the truth and worth of all things in the Prayer Book. There were scores of

¹ Henry Barrow, leader of the early Separatists, required this; and in 1680 his followers were on the increase.

things in the Prayer Book of whose truth and worth he was doubtful, or more than doubtful. His acceptance and admiration of the book as a whole did not touch that fact. He had tried in vain at the Savoy conference to bring home to the bishops that it must be so. Their answer was, to add a few more stones to his stumbling-block; and then, to back up the Bill which required him to swear that the stumbling-block did not exist. His refusal was inevitable. If there had been *one thing* in the book, instead of scores, which he took to be untrue or unworthy, his position would have been just the same. He could not have sworn to the contrary. To have done so, as he truly saw, would have been to perjure himself.

In this connection he spoke of his conscience as tender. In other words it had that spiritual life and feeling which 'perceiveth the evil of the least sin'. 'Its ground', he said, 'is the fear of God; and its object, the obedience of God'. 'It is, therefore, to be loved and cherished even when scrupulousness mistaketh the matter; and not to be reproached and discouraged or persecuted out of the world.'¹ There were many, however, who declared a tender conscience to be another name for 'a soft or foolish head'. Its possessor is apt to plead the will of God and his inward light, while proceeding from humour or pride, or wilfulness, or some worse principle. Such a person (they said) hardly deserves consideration or charity; and they seem to have quoted Hooker (surely with no true regard to his spirit), 'that no man is bound to part with his own freedom because his neighbour is froward and humorous'. Baxter's rebuke of so unchristlike a temper—especially in the pastors or shepherds of the flock—is keenly indignant, but too long to quote. Here are only two or three of his sentences. Granted that we are what you say we are, yet hath not God sent out his ministers to preach home 'such sinners . . . are not the souls of such as you call humorous, peevish or wilful, worth more than some of that which you call your liberty? Are they not worth more than a Pipe of Tobacco, or a Cup of Sack, or a Stage play, or a needless Ceremony, which you account as part of your liberty? Would you deny none of them to save many souls? . . . Do you not

¹ Paper V. 63.

thus reproach Christ? . . . and was He of your mind when He would have a right hand or a right eye rather lost than a soul hazarded by the scandal or temptations of it? . . . and was Paul of your mind when he said, “We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves”?’

Of course the argument was *ad hominem*. Baxter did not think his own conscience weak, or the Puritan conscience, or what has come to be called the Nonconformist conscience. But, admitting the charge, is it for you, the strong, to scoff at it, or force it? Ought you not to deal with it gently, and sacrifice something of your own preference for its sake, and try to bring it nearer the level of your own superior wisdom?

But, alas! conscience, whether strong or weak, counted for little in the business; and nothing seemed to Baxter more shocking, or more symptomatic of a prevalent moral degeneracy, than the levity with which his plea of conscience, or the fear of God, was treated. For example, some of ‘the most learned, sober, most judicious conformists’ as good as told him that he and his friends were quite right ‘*about the matter itself*’ in the Prayer Book to which they objected; that it seemed unlawful to them also; and that they could not have sworn compliance with it any more than Baxter if they had taken the words of the oath, etc, in his sense. In *my* sense? ‘But my sense is simply the plain literal sense. Is that not yours?’ No, (they said) we understand it only to mean ‘a belief that I may use it’. ‘You are too punctilious, or your Conscience too little unformed by learning, else you would see that there is another than the literal sense which is consistent with honesty.’

At all events, was Baxter’s ironical answer, it is consistent with your honour and preferment; while our stricter honesty is the cause of our sufferings and silence.

But, in sober truth, ‘if once the conscience of Oaths and Covenants be relaxed by stretching words to the taker’s interest, are not the lives of Princes left in danger and the bonds of common converse loosened?’¹ It was a cynical unbelief in conscience, or, at least, in the sincerity and strength of the Nonconformist conscience that, according to Baxter, led the Bishops to fancy that they could win their cause in the

¹ Paper IV. 121.

end by a steady application of force. You are strangely deceived (said Baxter). 'If you cannot persuade us to your mind by your books and sermons, however willing we may be to listen and learn, certainly you can never *compel* us to your mind.'

'Everyone that unfeignedly believeth that there is a God and a life to come (with a true practical belief) will rather die than deliberately and continuedly do that which he believeth doth displease God, and forfeit everlasting happiness.'

Baxter on this point is as sure as he can be. 'The sufferings of these times, "like the Martyrdoms of former ages", do tell you what men will further undergo, if you follow it on to the utmost: some have died in prison already; and some have died of the disease there taken; and many families live in very great necessities, that in the days of usurpation had food and raiment. Lately, I saw a credible letter craving relief for a godly minister in Kent who (when his infirmities, lately contracted, will permit him) doth spin at a wheel to get some bread for his family. And many others have suffered more. It is, therefore, evident that violence will never make them forsake that which they judge of so great truth and necessity to their own and other men's salvation.' 'My own acquaintance in England persuadeth me confidently to believe that (however very many would venture their souls to save their bodies, yet) if the Bishops could get laws to hang all Nonconformists or burn them as the Protestants in Queen Mary's days, there would be many hundred ministers, and many thousand of private Christians, rather be burnt than do the things now questioned against their consciences.'

If then the Church cannot regain its unity by force, nor can persuade to it by speech, so long as she sticks to her present terms, why should she stick to them?

They are condemned by the fact that their effect has been divisive. The terms of union must be such as really unite, not the few or the many of our own opinion, but 'all that Christ taketh in and will have us take in: that is, all that are fit for Church communion'. Why not learn from our failures? 'The long and sad experience of all the Christian Churches, which have been divided by (un)necessary human impositions;

and the voice of all wise peace-makers in all times (*who have still called for "Unity in things necessary, Liberty in things unnecessary and Charity in both"*) do leave those that yet will not be persuaded to those terms as inexcusable persons as almost any in all the world—worse than Physicians that would use all those things as the only remedies which have killed all that ever used them for 1,500 years.¹

But (he adds) external unity or uniformity, even on the basis of pure and undefiled Christianity, is not the same as universal peace and concord. It may be a sure means to it, or an effect of it, but is not the same. The way 'for universal peace is to make all men holy and the best more holy. And then they will have one centre, one end, one rule, one interest, one nature, one spirit and fervent love to one another, as to themselves, with all the peaceable graces, humility, lowliness, meekness, patience, etc. But this is a way rather to be desired and hoped for in heaven than hoped for among such a world of sinners here'.²

The last and longest of the essays in this volume is 'a Pacifactory account of the Nonconformist judgment', so far as Baxter was acquainted with it, about 'government and obedience', a subject of painful concern at that time to Baxter and his fellows when they were all accused, or suspected, of being secret political conspirators. But its only interest for us, at this point, lies in the Introduction, where he thinks fit to expound the political views of Spinoza (1632–77), classing him among Materialists like Hobbes (1588–1679). In 1670 Spinoza published his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, designed to show that the right to free thought and free discussion is not only consistent, but is necessarily bound up, with true piety and good Government. Baxter, who was somehow informed of all new books, got hold of this—and read it, of course in the Latin. Following the writer in the clear evolution of his thought, he came to Chapter XVI, which treats of the foundations of a commonwealth; of the natural and civil rights of individuals, and of the rights of the ruling authority. A large section of this chapter he translated,³ and laid before his readers to demonstrate that Spinoza's principles

1 Paper V. 155. 2 Paper V. 152. 3 Into beautiful English.

were subversive of humanity, morality, and government. He apologizes for quoting so much from this apostate Jew, on the ground that 'the pernicious book, having most subtly assaulted the text of the Old Testament,¹ is greedily sought and cried up (with Hobbes his equal) in this unhappy time even among those whose place should make them more regardful of the interest of Magistrates at least'—viz: among those who call themselves wits, but whom God (Psalm xiv) calls fools.

Baxter was not wrong in coupling Spinoza with Hobbes. Martineau (in his study of Spinoza) has pointed out that the doctrine of Chapter XVI is all to be found in the *De Cive*; and that in one place (elsewhere) Spinoza reflects the very language of Hobbes. But, though a logical outcome of his pantheism strictly taken, such a doctrine of brute force—might is right—did not express Spinoza's whole mind. He transcended it, at least ideally, in his 'Ethics'; and still more, practically, in his life. Baxter had to note a sign of this, and to acknowledge 'much undeniable truth' 'in the aforesaid infidel's' explanation 'of the wicked lives of Christians'. He translated the explanation as follows:

'Seeking the cause of this mischief I doubted not but hence it sprang, that vulgarly, it was a piece of religion to esteem the ministeries of the church as dignities; and its offices as benefices; and to give the Pastors the highest honour; and, as soon as this abuse crept in, presently all the worst men were invaded with a great desire of sacred administrations; and the love of propagating divine religion degenerated into sordid avarice, and so the Temple itself into a Theatre, where were heard, not Church teachers but Orators; of whom none thirsted to teach the people, but to draw them into admiration of themselves, and publicly to carp at dissenters, and to teach things new and unusual, and such things as the vulgar most admire. Whence great contempt, envy and hatred, which no antiquity could appease, must needs arise. No wonder, therefore, that of the old Religion nothing doth remain but the outward worship (by which God is rather flattered than adored) and that faith is become nothing but credulity and prejudice.'

¹ In Robert Willis's translation (1762) the sub-title is 'A critical enquiry into the History, Purpose and Authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures'.

Baxter had just been saying much the same himself and lamenting it, as he often did. He had an eye for every man's truth as well as error, and so he welcomed truth in Spinoza; but grieved that such a man should have found such great occasion for the speaking of truth so humbling to the Church.

NOTE

Grosart (List of Baxter's Writings) is confused about this volume.

(a) He quotes the titles of three of the Papers as those of separate books *published* in 1676.

(b) He quotes the title of a fourth as that of a book *published* in 1678.

(c) He does not notice the fifth, though this is by far the longest of the five.

(d) He fails to see that the words 'the contents of this extorted and distorted Treatise' (at the end) cover all five papers, so that they must have composed parts of the same volume.

(e) He overlooks the fact that the Papers were suppressed in 1676, not by the Censor but *by Baxter himself*. A sixth paper was both printed and published in 1676—setting forth 'the Judgment of Nonconformists of the Interest of Reason in matter of religion' . . . signed by Baxter and eleven (in some copies 14) other leaders. It was concerned simply to assert their theological orthodoxy—'against makebates'—which, no doubt, was why they could dare to publish without risk of trouble.

Dr Williams's Library. Pamphlets 9.6.4.

CHAPTER 2

THE IRRECONCILABLES

BAXTER's unflagging purpose to seek peace and pursue it in relation to the Church, carried with him, there can be no doubt, most of the ministers and their congregations whom he called 'Meer Nonconformists', though the common name for them was Presbyterians; and he could be sure, also, of many supporters among the Conformist clergy. The latter might not have approved entirely of his terms of accommodation, but terms of some sort they all desired. Over against these moderates, however, there stood at opposite poles the Separatists and the Prelates, who may be called the irreconcilables.

I

SEPARATISTS

The Separatists were the people who had never wished, or had ceased to wish, for incorporation with the Episcopal establishment. They had existed at least since the days of Elizabeth; had fallen off in number under James I; had renewed their strength after 1625; had increased amazingly beneath the fostering hand of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate; and had taken their place among the ejected as a matter of course, so far as they were not outside the pale already. The effect of the Clarendon Code was simply to embitter an antagonism which had never been inclined to compromise; and 'no-compromise' became more than ever the 'separatist' watchword. Certainly there were degrees of separating thoroughness. There were Independents like Philip Nye and Baptists like John Tombs to whom a 'via media' was not entirely obnoxious, inasmuch as they wrote in favour of Parish-Communion; and there was a right-wing of Presbyterian Separatists whose refusal of Parish-Communion was dictated rather by expediency than principle. That is, they thought it practically unwise, and liable to misunderstanding, to keep up any visible countenance of a church whose rulers would construe it as the sign of a divided mind.

How these right-wingers were gradually submerged and absorbed by the left is well told by Baxter in his autobiography¹—a passage which makes it easier to see how his efforts to win the Separatists to his middle-way did but exasperate. He was apt to boast e.g. that no man had done more than himself to decide waverers in favour of conformity—unless they could honestly assert, as before God, that conformity, for them, was a sin: a line of argument which brushed aside a whole heap of objections to conformity urged by Separatists. Again, he maintained his own Nonconformity as something tolerable and commendable, while casting reproach, on any advance beyond it, as really an advance into schism. This was why they so resented the book published in 1670, which he entitled *The Cure of Church-Divisions; or Directions for weak Christians to keep them from being Dividers or Troublers of the Church . . .*, followed in the same year by a *Defence of the Principles of Love which are necessary to the unity and concord of Christians . . .*, inviting all sound and sober Christians (by what name so ever called) to receive each other to communion in the same Churches; and, when that (which is first desirable) cannot be obtained, to bear with each other in their distinct assemblies and to manage them all in Christian love'. It was not pleasant for Separatists, or those of separatist tendency, to hear themselves spoken of as 'weak Christians'; and exhorted to prove themselves 'strong' by practising communion with the parish churches—for that was the special point of his appeal. The retort to which he tempted them was that the weakness lay with him; and that if he had a truer conception of the Church, its membership, privileges and duties, he would see it. His self-complacent attendance on the Church-services; his laudation of the liturgy; his extolling of Ministers as *jure divino* rulers of the Church, and of the sovereign civil power as its *jure divino* head; his decrying of the people's rule in the Church, under Christ, as sheer democracy; and his denunciation of Christ-governed congregations, outside the limits of a state-church, as organized expressions of self-will, pride, etc.—all this (they said) simply showed that he had much to learn in

¹ R.B. III, 42–43.

the way of truth as well as love. In particular the Separatists resented his treatment of them in his negotiations with the Government. In effect they said, 'You speak for your own party as if it were the whole of Nonconformity; you ignore us; and you would be content to secure your separate advantage apart from us, or even at the cost of our keener sufferings.' As to this, it may be admitted that Baxter's regard for the 'Meer Nonconformists' was too exclusive of the rest; but it is not true that he sought their exclusive interest. And yet his defence was not calculated to soothe. 'I am so tender of the Nonconformists' (here used in the broadest sense) 'that I will do my part to keep them from reproach. For too many are apt to judge of all their cause by anyone weakness and mistake. This was the reason why in 1660 and 1661, when we attempted a concord with the Bishops in vain, we never said a word against a Form of Prayer, nor the most of the Liturgy, nor Holy days, nor Kneeling at the Sacrament (but only against excommunicating the faithful that scruple it), nor the Surplice, nor the Ring in Marriage, nor laying the Hand on a book in swearing and other such, because, at least, much may be said for them; and if we laid our stress on doubtful things, many would think the rest were no other'.

The sense is clear. In speaking only for the 'meer Nonconformists' he hoped to obtain terms of concord which would incidentally embrace those who were inclined to lay too much stress on doubtful things. On the other hand, if he had pleaded expressly for the latter, he would have given a plausible excuse to the Bishops for identifying him with them; and calling all Nonconformists alike unreasonable. Respect, therefore, for the facts as well as for the honour of Nonconformity had restrained him. Nor (he adds elsewhere) had his action brought any special harm to the Separatists; and, besides, they were quite able to look after themselves. True. But they could not be expected to thank him for classing them with the unreasonable and weak. At any rate, the weakness (they said) was on his side. Their name for him was the 'temporiser'; and their wrath against him was like that of Henry Barrow against the conforming Puritans of the Elizabethan Church. Only the Separatists and Baxter were sufferers in the same

cause, whereas Barrow's wrath had an excuse in the fact that the conforming Puritans held on to their livings in the Church, while professing principles which ought to have driven them out. Baxter's crime was not that he remained in the Church, but that he wanted to return as soon as possible, and take them with him. Their opinions led them to condemn the Church in every particular, and hold off from it to the uttermost; this led him to commend the Church, as in many, and these the highest, respects the best of all existing Churches, from which it was the duty of none to hold aloof a moment longer than his conscience demanded. Such contrary points of view were irreconcilable. There could be no mutual approach except through mutual concessions, and these the Separatists were too angry to make. Baxter said they went farther, and were more unyielding than the old Brownists.¹ It will appear, I think, that he was not far wrong if we take by way of illustration his last encounter with Dr John Owen.

Something has been said (in the first volume, p. 239) about the Antinomian Controversy into which Owen was drawn by Baxter's too hasty charges or reflections (1649–50). The fire then kindled flamed up once and again; but appears to have died down and out by 1674—by which time both had come to see, perhaps, that the essential difference between them was not very real. At the Assembly of Divines in December 1654, convoked by Cromwell to devise a doctrinal formula for Ministers of his proposed Church-establishment, the two came face to face; and the simplicity of Baxter's formula offered a sharp contrast to the 20 (abortive) points of doctrine which Owen favoured and carried. Amid the agitating changes which immediately preceded the restoration, Baxter's political antagonism to Owen was radical and intense—though it may not have been expressed openly.² But when Owen, with himself, was among the 'Ejected'; and common suffering called upon them to consider how they stood to each other, Baxter tried to forget former aversions; and, thinking of him simply as a leader of the Congregationalists—indeed their most

¹ P. 19 of *Unnecessary Separating . . .*, third part of *Catholick Communion*, 1684.

² It appears more than once in deleted sentences of his autobiography.

trusted and sober leader—resolved to see if the Doctor and he could not discover some broad common ground upon which the Nonconformists generally might live and work together in peace. This was in 1668 and (as told in Vol. I, pp. 275–7) the experiment at first promised well. It was then, possibly, that Baxter found reason to say:

‘I think none of the Independents that are sober own any other sort of Church but the Universal, and single churches as themselves of it; and, therefore, require no contract but (1) to the covenant of Baptism or Christianity; and (2) to the Duties of their particular Church relation.’¹

But Owen cut short the correspondence. In his view it was leading nowhere, because the divergencies of practice and opinion were not to be so easily overcome as Baxter supposed. There was e.g. the matter of communion with parish churches. Apparently it did not emerge in 1668; but Owen must have been aware of his own disagreement with Baxter about it. Then came out the *Cure of Church Divisions*. . . in 1670; and, presently, Edward Bagshaw’s vehement resistance to its main contention. Owen let it be known that he was on the side of Bagshaw—to Baxter’s surprise and grief. But had he known more of Owen’s mind, he would have seen that there was no inconsistency. Owen, in fact, was the most consistent Independent of his age; and anyone who would understand what Independency is in itself; and, also, the aberrations from its central principle which were due to the abnormal influence of an ultra-Protestant reaction from Romanism, combined with an ultra-Protestant reverence for the letter of Scripture, can hardly do better than study John Owen. Unhappily it was the *aberrations* which fell most under Baxter’s notice—as in the parallel case of Quakerism. By contrast with these, his mental outlook is much the more liberal and luminous; but it does not necessarily follow that his central principle, or principles, were the more true.

In 1684 Baxter published *Catholick Communion defended against both extremes*. . . , consisting of two parts:² ‘Reasons

¹ *Catholick Communion defended*, Pt. I, p. 11.

² Later in the year it was enlarged to five parts, the first three being added to the fourth and fifth, which two composed the whole book in its first edition.

of the author's censured communion with the Parish Churches' and . . . 'The Reasons why Dr John Owen's twelve arguments against it change not his judgment.'

The date attached to the first part is January 10, 1680, and to the second, April 7, 1684, so that the former had lain for more than four years in MS. before the two were conjoined. 'Reader,' (says the preface to Pt. II) 'when the last sheet of the foregoing paper' (Pt. I) 'was printed I received these Twelve Arguments, famed to be Dr John Owen's. Whether fame truly or falsely father them I know not. It is the cause that I am concerned with'. They had been sent to him in MS. anonymously—though Baxter had reason to think, and later to be sure, that the sender was the Rev John Faldo, once Independent Minister at Barnet and now living in Pressyard, Newgate, London. The MS., it seems, had been passed from hand to hand before it reached Baxter, who at once saw its congruence with the paper he was about to publish, and the importance of making some answer to it. When 'Anonymous' heard of this, he wrote to Baxter deprecating his intention; and asking him to await 'some larger papers of the Doctor's'. But Baxter told him it was too late. 'Your letter came to me a week after the book was printed'. He told him, further, that his was the blame if any harm befell the Doctor's reputation, and added, 'I think you did him a great deal of wrong' by circulating the MS. Nay, 'you could scarce have wrong'd the Doctor or his memory more'. This is no exaggeration. For the MS. does, indeed, present Separatism in its starkest form; and justifies it in this form, on the mere ground that all worship conducted by means of a liturgy is unlawful, and especially so all worship conducted by means of the English Prayer Book. The twelve arguments—baldly stated as corollaries of Scripture—are all in defence of this single thesis. And what Baxter felt was what every reader acquainted with Owen must feel, that the MS. was a mere skeleton of the Doctor's thought—written hastily in response to particular enquiry—and not to be taken without some qualifications which he had no time, or (as he might fancy) no need to supply. Anyhow the MS. was going its round; was eagerly read; and was quoted with reverence as the last word of a great and wise

leader on the subject in question. And, as a matter of fact, whether due to Owen or not, revolt from everything liturgical in their services became a characteristic rule of the Independents henceforth. So it was that Baxter found it necessary, if possible, to produce an antidote.

There is no need to follow him into details, but only to quote, in their own words, Owen's principal assertions and then Baxter's general answer.

'The cause that I write against is this' (says Baxter)—'that God's worship (saith Dr O.) hath no accidentals; that all that is in it, and belonging to it, and the manner of it, is false worship, if it have not a divine institution in particular; that all liturgies, as such, are such false worship (and not the English only)—used to defeat Christ's promise of gifts, and God's Spirit.'¹

This is strictly in accordance with Owen's primary proposition and argument.²

A liturgy, in all its parts, is a form of false worship; and so all Churches using a liturgy are guilty of false worship. *For* nothing in the way of liturgical worship was prescribed or sanctioned by Christ or the Apostles.

The invention of liturgical worship marked the falling away of the Church from its spirituality. 'That which was in its first contrivance, and hath been in its continuance, an invention and engine to defeat, or render useless, the promise of Christ unto His church, of sending the Holy Spirit in all ages to enable it unto the due discharge and performance of all divine Worship in its assemblies, is unlawful to be complied withal, nor can be admitted in religious worship. But such is the liturgical worship'.³ In other words, the Holy Spirit is not given to, cannot be expected by, is withdrawn from, those who use a liturgy. This raised the issue at its deepest; and Baxter's answer was to the point. He appealed to experience. 'It is a great error to think that the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit may not be exercised, if we use the same words, or if they

¹ p. 2 of Postscript to '*An Account of the Reasons . . .*' Pt. V of *Catholic Communion*.

² pp. 12-18, '*An Account of the Reasons. . .*'

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

be prescribed. The chief help of God's Spirit lieth in giving us a due esteem of the things prayed for, and a holy desire after them, and a lively faith and hope that we shall obtain them, and a fixed resolution to use all other means for them, and avoid all that would deprive us of them. And, doubtless, he that hath these mental dispositions hath thereby a great help for his expression of them: for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh'.¹

So far, therefore, the presumption is in favour of free prayer. But, on the other hand, 'It's well known that use and knowledge can enable an hypocrite to pray as long, and in as good words and earnest tone, as a sincere christian'. Moreover, 'that which is easiest needeth the least help. It is to me (for example), so much easier to speak my own thoughts in prayer *extempore* than to remember a form of words, that never since I was 20 years old did I ever learn and say without book the words of one prayer or sermon, since I preacht. To have learnt a prayer or sermon without book, would have cost me ten times and more, both time and labour, and fear of being out, than I ever used or could afford'. Hence, there may be facility in free prayer without the Spirit's help, or without the Spirit at all. It is the union of faith with the words spoken which brings the Holy Spirit's help; and the words spoken may be as well prescribed as one's own. Indeed, 'if I have any help of God's spirit it is more in the use of "the Lord's Prayer" than at any other time'. And 'may not one sing Psalms by the help of the Spirit, unless he make them *Extempore*?' In fine, 'I doubt you lay too much on words. God's Spirit worketh on the heart, and its greatest help is in its greatest gifts, which are faith, repentance, love, desire, etc., and not words. Words must be used and weighed; but the main work is heart work, and God knoweth the meaning of the Spirit, when we have but groans, which we cannot express, and cry *Abba*, Father'.²

Baxter then shows that to speak of the Church as never having used the least bit of a liturgy in its first and purest days is a mistake. 'It's plain in the descriptions of Justin and Tertullian that they did use extemporate prayer then, but not that they did no otherwise. They had "their form of a creed";

¹ *An Account of the Reasons* . . . p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

“they used a set form of words in baptizing”; “they constantly used singing Psalms and Hymns which were not made *extempore*, nor by every singer”; “they used the Lord’s prayer in form often”; “at the time of the Lord’s supper they had divers words of form and responses”, etc.

It is a still more palpable mistake to say that, while the practice of ‘a devised worship’ deprived the Church of all its spirituality, a return to direct dependence on the Spirit, implied in free prayer, has brought it back. Glaring facts are against such a claim; and the most glaring (he goes on to say) may be found in the late triumph of separatism in England. Its chance came with Cromwell. It had, then, the freest scope for free prayer; and made full use of it. There was no check upon its ministers and their followers. For a few years they had it all their own way. With what result? Well, if spirituality lay in the will to employ their power for the destruction of King and Parliament and orderly Church government, they were certainly spiritual. But they threw Church and State into chaos, all the same. And, though ‘serious godliness much increased in most parts of the land’, it was mainly by the excellent preaching and living of that ministry whom these Separatists vilified. In a word, England’s experience of separatism triumphant seemed to Baxter proof, on a large scale, that, whatever the demerits of a Liturgy, the absence of it did not mean a richer presence of the Spirit. There was a rich presence of the Spirit (he says elsewhere), but not of the Holy Spirit by any means.¹ We have here one of many proofs that, on the subject of Cromwell and his supporters, his eyes were holden by invincible prejudice. He is much more convincing when he points to the observed inconveniences of unrestricted free prayer. ‘The people know not till the words are past whether they may own them; abundance of young, raw, unskilful men, do ordinarily disgrace prayer by their unskilful methods and expressions; heretics and erroneous men have great opportunity to put their sins into their prayer; less care is taken in speaking to God than in speaking to men, while most sober ministers study their sermons; the number of those who really try to avoid all such faults and to make their prayer what it should

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–8.

be is so small that to rule out all *but* these would be to deprive most Churches on earth of ministers; and so, as things are, young ignorant men who, by use, can speak fluently and fervently in prayer are followed by the people, when many great divines, judicious and holy, who have not that readiness in utterance are rejected as having not the Spirit'.¹ Facts like these, Baxter thought, were sure consequences of Owen's contention that the public worship of God, if it is to allow free play to the Spirit, must be guided by no written forms. A further consequence, which Baxter personally much disliked, was such a jealousy of forms in the separatist Meeting house that its services were reduced to utter nakedness—called, of course, simplicity. Nothing but a psalm, a prayer (or two) and a long sermon, was what he found in most of the separatist Churches. This was all he found for example in Rev Stephen Lobb's church, about whom he expressed his mind in a letter—'I solemnly profess to you that I take the ordinary use of the Liturgy in the Parish Churches (excepting the by-offices) to be much more laudable worship of God than yours, that read one chapter and sing one psalm. . . and preach and end with a prayer, as you do. I doubt not that God accepteth both theirs and yours; but I profit more by theirs than yours . . .'.²

The date of this letter was January 1678–9, which shows that the separatist revolt was complete, at least five years before Dr Owen gave it his last blessing. Baxter put his *via media* into a sentence—'I believe that the best way to avoid both sorts of evils' (those from a fixed liturgy and those from free prayer) 'is to have meet set forms, which shall be owned by the Church, as their professed desire, not being so long as to take up too much time from freer Prayer, much less to forbid it; which Calvin wisely ordered for France and Geneva'.³

He was derided both by the fanatics and the formalists—an experience so usual to him, as advocate of the golden mean, that he did not mind it on his own account. But in this case it was the spirit of the fanatics that most grieved him. They were so blind and bitter in their separation from the parish Churches that they had come to the point of thinking it a mark

¹ *An Account of the Reasons* . . . p. 25 (condensed). ² Baxter MSS (Letters), II, ff. 51^{ab}–60^{ab}, written to Dr Annesley. ³ *An account of the Reasons* . . . p. 25.

of Christian godliness to sweep out of their worship everything, in the faintest degree, suggestive of them. Baxter had striven to check the advance of that spirit for more than twenty years—as a spirit unjust, unchristlike and essentially schismatic. He had failed; and now Dr Owen had clinched his failure by fortifying the unhallowed spirit with the weapons of Scripture and logic! No wonder if his twenty-four reasons for making the best of the parish Churches beat in vain upon the great Independent's twelve for making the worst! But here is one of his twenty-four which it ought to have been hard to ward off. He calls it his greatest motive to parochial Communion:

'I dare not condemn Jesus Christ and his apostles, who communicated with far more vitiated societies. Christ preached daily in the Temple: he there offered according to the Law; and sent lepers cleansed to the Priests to offer, though the Priesthood was more corrupt and degenerated than ours. The High Priest that should have been of Aaron's line, was anyone that could buy it with money, or favour, of the heathen Romans. (And some think there were two at once.) The Pharisees had corrupted sacred doctrine and worship, and the Sadducees were far worse than the Mahometans; yet Christ did ordinarily join in the synagogues, and had he not joined in their liturgy, as the rest, he would have been noted for a disturber, and the Rulers would not have called him to preach, as they did others. . . . We find Christ bidding men, *Take heed of the leaven of the Pharisees*, but yet to *hear them* (delivering the Law) *in Moses' Chair*. They accused him for not separating more from Publicans and Sinners, but not for separating from the Temple or synagogues. He told his Disciples that men should cast them out of the synagogues, but never bid them depart themselves'.¹

There is very little of the excessive sharpness which flowed too readily from his pen in this answer of Baxter's to Owen. Perhaps the sharpest sentence is the one in which he says that he undertook it because the twelve arguments seemed likely to prevail more by the honour of Dr Owen's name than by any strength that is in them: 'I was willing, as long as I could, to believe that they were not his, they being as fallacious and

¹ *Unnecessary Separating* . . . , p. 23. (4th Pt. of 'Catholick Communion').

frivolous as any of the rest: and *one* error managed with above forty mistakes'. Some blamed him for seeming to censure so worthy a man when he was dead,¹ and unable to answer for himself. 'I shrank from doing so', he says 'but durst not let the writing of a dead man be so dangerous a trap for souls; and silently see the mischief prosper, for fear of displeasing the mistakers'.

He goes on in a strain of tempered panegyric which it is good to read:

'Let the Reader know that it is so far from my design to wrong the name of Dr Owen by this defence, that I do openly declare, that except in this point of his mistake (and who mistaketh not in more than one?) I doubt not but he was a man of rare parts and worth . . . yea, in his doctrinal writings, in his later years, he is much clearer than heretofore. Even that book of *Communion with the Trinity* is an excellent treatise, and his great volume on the Hebrews, do all show his great and excellent parts. It was his strange error, if he thought that freedom from a liturgy would have made most, or many, ministers like himself, as free and fluent and copious of expression. In the late time he had never been so long Dean of Christ Church; so oft Vice-Chancellor of Oxford; so highly esteemed in the Army, and with the persons then in power, if his extraordinary parts had not been known. But, reader, if this excellent man had one mistake (against all liturgies and separation from them) when yet he was, of late years, of more complying mildness, and sweetness, and peaceableness than ever before, or than many others; and if you will use his name and authority for this one error, let me tell you, I am confident you will wrong Dr Owen by ignorant defending him. I doubt not but his soul is now with Christ, and that, though heaven have no sorrows, it hath great repentance; and that Dr. Owen is now more against the receiving of this his mistake than I am; and that by defending it you far more displease him than me. There is there no darkness, no mistakes, no separation of Christ's members from one another; no excommunicating or renouncing of communion. They all repent that ever they did anything against Christian love and unity, and received

¹ Died August 24, 1683.

not one another as Christ receiveth us, and did not own communion in all that was good, while they avoided the wilful consent to evil'.

It is a pity he did not stop there, but let himself be carried away into an imaginary speech which the beatified yet penitent Doctor would certainly speak to his friends on earth, if he could. This gives an impression of bathos; and, in some of its immediate readers, it excited something like horror. But Baxter meant well; and, at least, he takes leave of his old opponent on a generous note.

2

PRELATISTS

If the Separatists were an irreconcilable hindrance to concord from outside the Church, the Bishops were the same from within. But not all the Bishops, in an equal degree. Baxter is careful to discriminate. In the Preface to an *Apology for the Nonconformist Ministry* . . . (1681) he names Compton, Bishop of London; Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln; Crofts, Bishop of Hereford; Rainbow, Bishop of Carlisle; Thomas, Bishop of St Davids; Lloyd, Bishop of Peterborough, as examples of 'moderation and love of our common peace and concord'. 'You are not the men', he says, 'that resisted and frustrated our earnest endeavours and hopes of concord at his Majesty's return, 1660 and 1661; nor made the Act of Nonconformity, or the rest by which we suffer; nor have you been the makers of any engines to wrack and tear in pieces the Church and Kingdom . . .'

'You are reputed among us Nonconformists not only true to the Protestant cause, but lovers of good men, and no lovers of cruel silencings, violence, or blood. Though I know but few of you, I have reason to believe this fame; and some of you¹ have publicly declared your endeavour to the world'. To them, therefore, and the like of them, he could look with hope. 'Give me but a sober understanding man to deal with, and I undertake to shew him, that by a mere reforming of the parish

¹ Croft, for instance, in his book, *The Naked Truth, or the true state of the Primitive Church, by an Humble Moderator* (1675).

Churches, so far as yourselves confess to be desirable and just (with such a limited toleration of peaceable sound Christians as christian reason must acknowledge necessary) we may be brought *yet* to an happy concord, and a better reformation than England yet ever saw, *without doing the least wrong or hurt to the Diocesans*’. The last sentence is noticeable. Baxter was often said to be against the institution of Bishops and certainly of diocesan Bishops; but he was not, nor had he ever been. He was only against Diocesans in so far as their function invaded the right of a parish Minister—*Episcopus Gregis*—to rule his own congregation. Secure to the parish minister this right, in its due extent, and there would be no opposition on his part to diocesan Bishops, or Archbishops, or even Patriarchs, if found expedient.¹ Did the moderate Bishops whom he addressed agree with him, as he seemed to hope? I think not. At any rate, either they did nothing, or their influence was futile; nay, one of them—the pliant Barlow—is found, three years later, backing up the Bedford quarter-sessions in a sharp order for a strict enforcement of the laws against Nonconformists. In fact, the Moderates were too much in love with a false peace to sacrifice much, or anything, for justice; and so the new Clergy, inspired by Bishops like Morley, Gunning, Sheldon, Ward, etc., had come under no effectual check. As to these, Baxter said in 1681, ‘We profess that we have no hope that ever they will be reconciled to us’. His hope then was that their power might be on the wane. But by 1691 that hope had died. The The Anglo-Catholics, as we should say, had come to the top; and, looking back, he could see that they had always been at the top—because all along they had been the active party, and had known their own mind, and been controlled by a single purpose, viz.: to carry out Laud’s coercive programme at whatever cost. True, the clergy now (1691), says Baxter, would fain blame the Parliament for all the ‘severities’ of the last thirty years; and wash their own hands as guiltless of all. It had become convenient to do so. But he would not let them forget.

1. It was they, and their chief Bishops and Doctors, that,

¹ ‘Even Dr Sherlock is less Episcopal than I am inasmuch as he saith, It is anti-christian to assert *Episcopus Episcoporum*.’ *True History of Councils*, pp. 66–7.

when the King commissioned them to agree on '*such alterations as were necessary to tender consciences*', after all importunity, *concluded that no alteration was so necessary*.

2. And it was the Bishops and Convocation that altered the Book for the worse and put in new matter harder than before.

3. And the Bishops in Parliament were the chief agents in all the laws by which we are undone.

4. And it is known that it was the interest of the Bishops and their Church-way that engaged the *Long Parliament*¹ in all their terrible Acts against us, viz.: the Act of Uniformity, the Acts for Banishment, the Five Mile Act, the Corporation Act, the Militia Act, the Vestry Act and others.

5. And who knoweth not that it is they and their disciples that make the great stir against our healing, in jealousy of their interests, which nothing but their own overdoing is like to overthrow.

6. And when did they ever once petition any Parliament to reverse the dividing wicked laws, or to restore the silenced Ministers?

7. And the Laudians, called Tories, are still as much against the removal of the dividing, persecuting snares; and against the coalition of English Protestants, on any healing terms, as ever; and as fiercely seek the continuance of our slavery and silence.²

In this connection, he has a passage which is of curious historic—and not merely historic—interest.

It is a hard controversy (since Laud) which of the two parties is to be called the Church of England—the old Protestant party of Hooker, Bilson, Jewel, even Whitgift and Bancroft, etc., or the new party of self-styled Catholics who hanker after union with Rome. Both parties pretend to the title, but the latter, at present, has the advantage, thanks, in large measure, to 'the infamous Roger L'Estrange', 'who has fastened the name of Trimmers' on the former. For many years he was 'employed by his Genius, and the Court, and the Papists, and the New Clergy men, to do a work so truly diabolical as I never

¹ That is the *first* Parliament of Charles II, 1661–79.

² *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction*, p. 324 ff. (1691). Cp. *The History of Councils* (1681), p. 210.

read of the like in history—even to write and publish twice a week a dialogue called *Observations*, mainly levelled against love, peace, and piety, to persuade all men to hate their brethren and to provoke men to destroy them whom he nicknamed Whigs; and to render odious all save the Wolves (whom he called Tories, as if he owned the Irish Robbers), so that a Trimmer with him was the same as a peacemaker, blessed by Christ, and cursed by L'Estrange'.¹

In one place (at least) Baxter declares that if he had been of 'their opinion he might have done as the Laudians had done. For the sincere among them had merely worked out consistently certain accepted premises; and what were these? He condenses a summary of them from Dodwell's writings, but ascribes the same doctrine to Bishop Bramhall, Thorndike and others:

1. 'That there is (or should be) a human Universal Church—supremacy, aristocratical or monarchical'.
2. That this power is so absolute that there is no appeal from it to Scripture, or God's judgment.
3. That this power doth make universal laws for all the Church by General Councils.
4. That the Pope hath the Primacy or Presidentship in those Councils ordinarily.
5. That he is the *Principium Unitatis*.
6. That it belongs to the President, antecedently, to call Councils and to him alone, so that they are but unlawful Routs or rebellious, if they assemble without his call; and that they are schismatics who dissent and disobey this supremacy.
7. That the Reformed Churches, for want of Episcopal Ordination uninterrupted from the Apostles' times, are no true Churches; have no true Ministry or Sacraments, or Covenant right to salvation; but, by pretending them, do sin against the Holy Ghost.
8. But that the Church of Rome, by virtue of an uninterrupted Episcopal succession, is a true Church; hath a true Ministry and Sacraments, and Covenant right to salvation.

1 P. 315, *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (1691).

9. That the French—Church (which we call Papists) are safer than the Protestants.
10. That the said French clergy, and the Councils of Constance and Basil were no Papists.
11. 'That the said Protestants being schismatics and sinning against the Holy Ghost, the Magistrates that will not be contemnners of religion are bound to punish them'.¹

Such doctrine, says Baxter (except the last point), may be found in Grotius; and is what he set himself to expose and refute in 1658. It was to be found more or less in Andrewes and Laud and Bramhall and Heylen and Thorndike. It lay behind and determined the action of Morley, Gunning, etc., at the Savoy Conference. It produced its natural effect when it not merely steeled them against concessions, but also inclined them to clear the ranks of the Clergy, once and for all, of any and every possible gainsayer. If Baxter did not see this clearly in 1661 it seemed clear as day to him in 1691 . . .

'When we told them (Morley, etc.) how great a number of the most godly and loyal people of the land would be undone for nothing, by the impositions which they seemed to resolve for, and how unavoidable a division it would cause throughout the nation . . . and how easily all this might be by them prevented, and the love and honour of their persons hereby won, Dr Gunning and others told us plainly that *they had a greater party than we are to consider, that must not be alienated to please us*; and when Dr Bates said that abundance more of the Popish ceremonies might be introduced by the same reasons as were pleaded for those imposed, Dr Gunning answered, they must have more and not fewer. And Dr Morley told me that he had good reason to believe that most of the Roman Church on this side the Alps (i.e. France) would have joined with us, were it not for the stumbling-blocks that Calvin had laid in the way.²

If, indeed, the Anglo-Catholics were bent, as Baxter insists, on a definite coalition with the French catholic clergy on the

¹ From Baxter's letter to Dodwell, prefixed to chap. i. of '*An answer to Mr. Dodwell and Dr. Sherlock* (unpaged).

² *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction*, p. 319.

basis of what is known as Episcopal Gallicanism,¹ this, if not Popery, was Romanism, and would explain why they sought to reduce the strictly Protestant, or Puritan, element in the Church to a minimum; and why they never tried to obtain relief for the Nonconformists without trying, at the same time, to open a door for the Romanists; and why they were so zealous for the King's prerogatives while (*or* because) suspecting, or knowing, him to be a convert to Rome; and why they measured out to Baxter a full cup of angry abuse, as being the one who did most to lay bare and counteract their scheme.

That he exaggerated the danger, and often misread its signs, must be admitted. But its reality cannot be denied. From the date of his first warning in 1658 to the year of his death, 1691, the evidence for it grew upon his hands; and in his last book, *Against the revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction*, reaches a bulk and variety which seem irresistible. But the scheme came to nothing because, all along, it was a clerical scheme, with no support from the good sense of the English people—a fact which our modern Anglo-Catholic party would do well to remember. In one respect, however, the Anglo-Catholics succeeded grievously: for it was due to them, as it is still due to them, that not even a truce, much less a treaty of concord, had any chance of taking effect. They were irreconcilables.

Baxter's refutation of them, as represented by Dodwell,² is too entangled with the subject of Gallicanism to be of much living interest. Another subject, however, on which he dwells is by no means dead—I mean Dodwell's central doctrine of Episcopacy. According to him the Diocesan Bishop is constitutive

1 As distinguished from Royal or Parliamentary Gallicanism, of which the two fundamental maxims were these: (1) Kings are Independent of the Pope. (2) In the domain of spiritual things the supreme authority belongs to General Councils and not to the Pope, who on the contrary must obey their canons. Article in *E.R.E.* on Gallicanism.

2 Whether quite fairly I am not sure. For he admits in one place (last letter to Dodwell) that the Churchmen he heard from despised him and said, 'What is Mr Dodwell to us? He is an unordained man (he knoweth why) and his book was rejected by the Bishop of London. His opinions are odd, and the Church of England is not of his mind'. But, at the same time, men like Dr Sherlock were ready to boast of him and his performance when it suited them, though sometimes disowning him. It looks as if he spoke out, too frankly, what caution kept back in others. See note 1 at end of this section.

of the Church in virtue of the fact that his orders have come to him by uninterrupted descent from the Apostles. Therefore, *ubi episcopus ibi Ecclesia*. The visible Church is the Episcopal communion. To this the ordinary means of salvation are confined. These ordinary means are not hearing the word preached or private prayer, or anything else, but an external participation of the sacraments; and the validity of the sacraments depends on the authority of the persons by whom they are administered; and no other ministers have the authority of administering but only they who receive their orders in Episcopal communion. So everyone who wills to be saved must hold by the Episcopal communion of the place where he lives. Moreover, he is obliged to submit to all un sinful conditions of that communion if imposed by the ecclesiastical Governors thereof; and whether the conditions are sinful or un sinful, is determined by the judgment of the Bishop; and to separate oneself, or suffer oneself to be excluded for refusal to submit to such conditions, is to be guilty of the sin of schism.¹

It is melancholy to reflect that views substantially the same as these are still flourishing in the Anglican Church. No doubt the extreme separatist doctrine ascribed to Dr Owen was not less narrow, harsh, and mischievous; but then it has been extinct for at least a hundred years, whereas Dodwell's doctrine, though it died down during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth, has taken a new lease of life, has become militant, and defiant. Essentially schismatic, it claims to be catholic. Blind to the logic of experience, it claims the future for its own; and, meanwhile, is both disruptive of the Church it professes to revere, and the most irritating of hindrances to any wider union. In these circumstances we can understand Baxter. His situation was largely our own. His protests and arguments all have a modern ring. Much, indeed, that he said to undermine the historic basis of Dodwell's doctrine has been said more recently in fewer words, and with fuller knowledge. But the moral and scriptural plea against it could not be better put than in sentences like these:

'This I am satisfied of, that my schismatical Principles take

¹ *Answer to Dodwell*, Chap. II, pp. 7-21 (first column).

into Church communion such as you, and those that are in knowledge below, not only you but me, even the weakest true Christians. But upon your Catholic terms, no man of my *measure* of knowledge must be tolerated to be a preacher, or a Christian in Church-communion, nor live—at least out of gaol or some such penalty.¹ Surely a doctrine which so operates cannot be true?

Again, you deprecate preaching; you say that a true minister of Christ hath no necessary work but to administer Sacraments; and you ask how can we prove that preaching is at all any essential part of the ministerial office? Well, what of Christ's own practice and his command to those whom he called and sent; and their practice; and the Holy Ghost's determination by them (many texts cited). On the other hand, where do you find that ever anyone in the New Testament was ordained a mass Priest, or sacrament Priest, and not a Teacher?

Therefore, 'I will yet believe 2 Timothy iv. 1, 2, that a minister must preach the word in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, partly to convert the unconverted; partly to confirm and guide believers; and that the people should ask the law at his mouth, as being the messenger of the Lord of Hosts; and that the very essence of his office is to be a minister under the teaching, priestly, and ruling office of Christ'.²

But (you say) the right to preach and the right to administer the Sacraments (or at least the Lord's Supper) depend upon a right ordination, and a right ordination can be had only from Bishops whose power to ordain has been derived through an unbroken line of Bishops from Christ and his Apostles. Hence men otherwise ordained are no true ministers of Christ; and all they do, as ministers, is vain; and the Churches they form, or serve, are churches only in name.

In effect, the rulers of the church after the Convocation of 1661 said just this; and, therefore, ministers whose ordination had been presbyterial (not to mention congregational), could have no place in the church, unless reordained. Baxter himself might have escaped, for he had been ordained by the Bishop of Worcester; and yet he might not: for how did he

¹ *Answer to Dodwell*, p. 93.

² Gathered from pp. 50, 51, *ibid.*

construe his own ordination? His account of it is that he felt himself engaged thereby 'to God, *durante vita*, in a perpetual office'.

It was an act on his part, and also on God's, final and complete. He calls it a contract, of which the Bishop was but the mediator; and a contract which could not be annulled, save by God or his own disloyalty. 'A Priest may marry man and wife but cannot unmarry them. A Bishop may crown and anoint the King but cannot depose him; nor can he unbind one whom he has ordained from the obligation to do his proper work, or lawfully forbid him to do it'. This was his answer to Dodwell's contention that if the Bishop commanded him to give up preaching he must obey.¹ But it also suggests his deeper reason for not advancing from the status of Deacon to the Priesthood. Probably, if he had been urged (by his Rector, Mr Mastard, e.g. at Bridgnorth) to make the advance in his early days, for the sake of order, he would have complied. But in itself it meant nothing to him, and added nothing to the commission he had received once for all,² so that when the course of events left him free to please himself, he took no further thought for what must have seemed to him little more than a formality. Certainly the omission carried with it no loss of ministerial privilege in his own eyes. It did not, for example, disable him from administering the Lord's Supper. He administered it as a matter of course when he took up the full ministerial charge of his Kidderminster parish. At first, no doubt, he left it to the ignorant old vicar; but he left it to him because (as we have seen) he thought sacraments of less significance than preaching. Nor did the omission seem to count for anything in the eyes of others. There is not to be found the slightest hint of a demur to him on that score, even in such high churchmen as Sir Ralph Clare and Lord Clarendon. His not being a Priest made no bar to his being offered a Bishopric. But it needs to be remembered that the offer came before 1662. It came just when, by the King's Declaration, the basis of communion in the Church seemed about to be broadened. No close scrutiny of his Orders, therefore, was likely. The new Act,

¹ P.S. to *Apology for our preaching* . . ., Oct. 27, 1675.

² Nor indeed does the service for the ordaining of Priests seem to add anything.

however, rendered close scrutiny imperative; and this would have brought the 'flaw' in his Orders to light at once; and then, even if he had been able to conform in all other points, there would have been no offer of a Bishopric, nor so much as a footing in the ministry, unless he could have assented—which he could never have done—to ordination in its narrowed and narrowing sense. Here we return to the vital differences (for Baxter) between the days before and after 1662. Formerly, though Episcopal ordination had been, as he admitted, the customary rule of the Church, and a rule sanctioned by general use for a thousand years, it was not an exclusive rule. Some departures from it at least were allowed, and no responsible person spoke of it as a necessity. The early Reformers did, not so regard it. 'Dr Stillingfleet', in his *Irenicon*, says Baxter, 'recites the words of Cranmer and others of them, at a consultation, downright against not only the necessity of an uninterrupted necessity, but even of Episcopal ordination itself. And I have elsewhere cited about fourteen of them for the validity of ordination without Bishops'.¹ Hooker, indeed, held a very exalted view of Bishops. 'Let us not fear to be herein bold and peremptory, that if anything in the Church's government, surely the first institution of Bishops was from heaven, was even of God, the Holy Ghost was the author of it'. But while he held this clear conviction on the chief point . . . he refused to infer from the divine sanction of Episcopacy any sweeping conclusion as to the absolute and invariable necessity of it. In accordance with his constant view of the relation between general laws and special equity, he held that while 'the whole church visible, being the true original subject of all power, it hath not ordinarily allowed any other than bishops alone to ordain: howbeit, as the ordinary course is ordinarily in all things to be observed, so it may be in some cases not unnecessary that we decline from the ordinary ways'.²

Whitgift's view was moulded on Hooker. It was Bancroft—afterwards his successor in the Archbishopric of Canterbury—who first (it is said) gave voice to the dogma of necessity in his

¹ Answer to Dodwell . . . p. 26. See note II at end of this section.

² See Bishop Paget's Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, p. 118, with references.

sermon at St Paul's Cross on February 9, 1588–9.¹ Determined to fight the dogmatic Presbyterianism of Thomas Cartwright (*cir.* 1535–1603) on its own ground, he met his claim of a divine right for the Presbyterian order with an equally positive claim of a divine right for Episcopacy. Yet even Bancroft himself, says Baxter, did not go so far as to deny Presbyterian ordination to be valid. He did not, that is, apprehend the whole logic of his position. All the same, an exclusive divine right of Bishops to ordain was the inevitable consequence. The two claims were coeval. James I, with his 'no Bishop, no King', fostered them into vigorous self-confidence. Their growth kept pace with the growth of his absolutism. They rose to full height in Laud, as kingly absolution rose to full height in Charles I; and both absolutisms fell together. But both rose again in 1660—with this difference, that Charles II had to hide his absolutism as best he could, while the Bishops got theirs assured to them by law. Whereupon—naturally enough—they began to argue and act as if the rule of the English church could never have been anything else!

Baxter identified himself with his insulted brethren, and speaking for them, he wrote: 'When all's done, we are far from granting that we have less to shew for our succession from the Apostles than Pope or Diocesans have.

1. We are sure that we have the same Baptism, Eucharist, Creed, Lord's Prayer, Decalogue and Scripture, delivered down from the Apostles.
2. We are sure that we have a ministry of the same *species* which Christ and his spirit in the Apostles instituted.
3. We know that our Churches and worship and doctrine are the same that are described, and settled, by the Apostles.
4. We know that our present ministers are qualified as the Apostles required.
5. And that they are elected or consented to by the Flocks, as the Apostles required.

¹ The sermon as printed (pp. 106) was enlarged by the addition of passages omitted through want of time or default in memory. Pages 14, 17–30, 97–8, 102, seem decisive enough of his purpose to claim for Bishops a *jus divinum* and necessity from the Apostles.

6. And that they have as good an ordination and investure as the Apostles ever made necessary to the ministry.

That is:

- (a) They have the approbation of *senior* pastors, and many of them diocesans.
- (b) They were ordained by true Bishops. For ‘they were ordained at, and by, a Synod of Presbyters in some great town or city, where the Moderator, and the chief city Pastors were part’ and ‘all true Presbyters are *Episcopi Gregis*’.
- (c) Many of them were ordained by diocesans.
- (d) Many ordained, as aforesaid, were, after approved by diocesans, some by imposition of hands, and all by word, or writing.
- (e) And we know that such a ministry hath continued to propagate the Church and Gospel in the world since the Apostles’ days.’¹

The tree is known by its fruit.

Note the implication under (d) that formerly some who had been ordained by Presbyters, accepted, and perhaps sought, the formal approval of Diocesans, including, it may be, a certificate of fitness to serve the Church. When no question was raised as to the validity of their ordination, this was possible; and, in the interests of unity, Baxter thought it right. Bishop Morley tried to bring him over to something of the sort, under the new order,² but Baxter’s answer was decisive, that, under the new order, ‘approval’ must entail an impossible ‘ordination *de novo*’.

What most amazed Baxter was the arrogance of the new doctrine. Cutting off, as it did, all the Reformed Churches abroad and all dissenters at home, was it not literally schismatic—though, with unconscious irony, calling itself Catholic? Any doctrine (he was in the habit of saying) which so defines, or conceives, the Church as to exclude true Christians is, to that extent, schismatic.

What, then, could he say of a doctrine which made all turn

¹ Answer to Dodwell, pp. 54, 55.

² R.B. III, 128.

upon ordination by a Bishop, which, accordingly (*inter alia*) threw its shield over 'drunken, lazy, ignorant men' who had been so ordained, and constrained the people of their respective parishes constantly to communicate with them; while it rejected zealous, godly, charitable, excellent preachers, if they had not been so ordained, and required them to be re-ordained, and *ipso facto* excommunicated all their congregations? It seemed to Baxter schism *in excelsis*. Yet this was the state of things in England after 1662.¹

NOTE I

Henry Dodwell (1641–1711), born at Dublin, and educated, after 1656, at Trinity College, was never in orders. He missed a Fellowship at Trinity College on this account. He declined orders from the mean opinion he had of his own abilities; and, above all, from a conviction that he could be of more service to religion and the Church as a layman than he could be as a clergyman. An exact conscientiousness marked him throughout his life. Just how and when he and Baxter became acquainted with each other is not certain, but the first notice of acquaintanceship is a letter which Baxter wrote to Dodwell in December 1672. The occasion of it was a book sent to him by Dodwell; and the latter in his reply of December 14, 1672 (written from Trinity College near Dublin) calls Baxter's 'a very kind letter' and signs himself 'your unfeigned well wisher'.² Baxter met this with a letter of fourteen pages³ on January 5, 1672–3 and subscribed himself

Your unworthy fellow-servant

(worthy to be silenced).

Dodwell's rejoinder came in a letter of twenty-eight pages—showing 'great learning, ingenuity and piety, and in a very fluent style'—which Baxter had to put off with a letter of four pages on August 5, 1673.⁴

This, the shortest, is the most interesting of the correspondence.

Here, for example we read:

'Could I have proved Conformity lawful . . . I need not have undergone the common scorn and hatred that I have borne, nor to have been deprived of all ministerial maintenance, and silenced for eleven years of that part of my life which should have been most serviceable (to

¹ See Appendix 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 75–89.

² *Answer to Dodwell and Sherlock*, pp. 70–5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 90–4.

add no more). My reputation, with those on the other extreme, I did voluntarily cast away by opposing them (when I could as easily have kept it as most I know) lest it should be any snare or tempting interest to me. I assure you—that I have not wanted bread is a thing that I owe no thanks to any party for, either Prelatists, Presbyterians, or Independents &c. I confess I have read what the anti-Prelatists say. . . . But I have, too, diligently studied, since I was twenty years of age, the chiefest on the other side. . . . And I have now, as you desired, read over *all yours*, that I might see the end, before I passed any judgment on the beginning. But our apprehensions are as various as our preconceptions' are: I find that we are all forestalled and readiest to learn of ourselves, who are not always the readiest Teachers of ourselves'. 'And I must say that our different educations, I doubt not, is a great cause of our different sentiments. Had I never been a Pastor nor lived out of a College (and had met with such a taking orator) I might have thought as you do. And had you conversed with as many country people as I have done, and such country-people I think you would have thought as I do.'

Dodwell came to London, and there was many a talk between them; but no approach to agreement. A letter to Dodwell on November 15, 1680,¹ intimates that Baxter had received one of October 16 which signified his purpose to publish the long letter of twenty-eight pages (referred to above), evidently as the more adequate statement of his case. So, Baxter announces that he has printed an old *Treatise of Episcopacy*, which he had cast by, as an answer to that letter. He sends a copy of it. But before this—July 9, 1677—he had written a letter of eighteen pages² followed by one of thirty-one pages (after some fruitless talks with him). His last letter is dated March 12, 1681–2,³ and is a brief comment on four points which Dodwell had insisted on, in a recent interview. The correspondence closed as it began in apparent and perhaps genuine amity. Baxter signs himself 'your friend'. Their differences went down to the deepest roots of faith and life. But on Baxter's side, at any rate, there could still be a unity of spirit: for he had no doubt of Dodwell's goodness.

NOTE II

Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*, or a weapon-salve for the Church's wounds . . . was published in 1659 when the writer was Rector of Sutton in Bedfordshire. It was the work of a young man of twenty-four; and had for its

¹ *Answer to Dodwell and Sherlock*, pp. 97–9.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 100–51, as to the 'Treatise'. See *R.B.*, III, 188.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94–6.

main object to prove that no form of Church-government can be based on a *Jus Divinum*, but is a matter for prudence to decide. The 'consultation' referred to, took place at Windsor Castle at Cranmer's instance by the King's (Edward VI's) special order, to resolve certain questions, of which the eleventh was 'whether a Bishop hath authority to make a Priest by the Scripture or no; and whether any other but only a Bishop may make a Priest'? Cranmer, speaking for the assembly of two Archbishops, three Bishops and ten Divines, said 'yes' to both parts of the question, and so reported to the King.¹ On a later page (413) Stillingfleet says '... it is acknowledged by the stoutest champions for Episcopacy, before these late unhappy divisions, that ordination performed by Presbyters, in cases of necessity, is valid, which I have already shewed doth evidently prove that episcopal Government is not founded upon any unalterable divine right'.

He supports this statement by citing Dr Field, Bishop Downam, Bishop Jewel, Sarevia, Bishop Alley, Bishop Pilkington, Bishop Bridges, Bishop Bilson, Dr Nowel, Bishop Davenant, Bishop Prideaux, Bishop Andrewes and others. But he does not cite these at first hand. He takes them as cited by 'our Reverend and learned Mr Baxter in his *Christian Concord*'. They are in fact, the fourteen or so alluded to by Baxter himself.

¹ Pt. II, Chap. VIII, 383 ff.

CHAPTER 3 BAXTER'S CHURCHMANSHIP

IT will serve to clear what, after all that has been said, may be still obscure—I mean Baxter's positive ecclesiastical position, and so the ultimate ground of his negative attitude to Prelacy, Presbyterianism and Separatism—if I quote a few passages from one of the last of his printed books, entitled *National Churches*. . . . (March 1691.)¹

Consideration of these passages would seem to indicate that he was in substantial agreement with Hooker and Laud and even Hobbes, for Hooker wrote (*Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book VIII, Chap. I (5)):

'When we oppose the Church . . . and the commonwealth in a Christian society we mean by the commonwealth that society with relation to all the public affairs thereof, only the matter of true religion excepted, by the Church, the same society with only reference to the matter of true religion, without any other affairs besides.'

Laud also wrote to the same effect:

'Both Commonwealth and Church are collective bodies, made up of many into one, and both so near allied that the one, the Church, can never subsist but in the other, the Commonwealth; nay, so, near, that the same men, which in a temporal respect make the Commonwealth do in a spiritual make the Church.'²

And there is no need to say that Hobbes found it easy, if not necessary, on his premises, to identify Church and Commonwealth. Perhaps Hobbes really came nearest to Baxter in theory—though the latter would have been horrified at the suggestion. Nor would he easily have admitted substantial agreement with Laud. But one might have expected him to take his stand alongside Hooker whom he much admired.

Yet, in fact, he held off from him, strange to say, for the simple

¹ p. 72.

² Quoted by Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 171, in a context which illustrates with remarkable force and fairness, how this conception animated Laud in his persistent efforts to work out a policy of social justice as well as ecclesiastical uniformity.

reason that Hooker impaired the divine rights of Kingship. In a long unpublished letter to Bishop Morley, one of his pleas is this: 'I did in 1663 or 1664 write my *Christian Directory* and, there, a large confutation of Mr Hooker, as to the body's (i.e. the people's) original and necessary power of legislation, and the King's receiving his power from the people, and his holding it in dependance on them, and in subordination, and his resignation, if they desire it for their good, and the escheating of the power into their hands, and his being *Singularis major et universis minor*, and more such . . .'¹ Accordingly, in almost his last printed book ('against a Foreign Jurisdiction', p. 542), he could speak of Hooker as agreeing, in principle, with the republican politicians who would vest the headship of the Church in 'the major part of the body, ruling by their representatives and chosen proxies, which is called a democracy'.

Of course he was wrong. Hooker was no more a democrat than himself, and Baxter had no right to make him one on the strength of a merely logical inference from Hooker's argument, that Kingly Power derived itself originally from the will of the people: for that is the whole of his case.

But how it emphasizes his reverence for the divine origin and character of the Kingly office! I say the Kingly office; because it was this that he revered, rather than any particular holder of the office, or any hereditary royal house. A William III might be as truly the Lord's anointed as a James II—nay, more so, if God made it clear that He had chosen the one and rejected the other.²

But the Kingly office was divine; and carried with it the headship alike of Church and State. Yet he refused to be called an Erastian. He gave more power and dignity to the King, as Head of the Church, than the Erastians or even the most fanatical advocates of his divine right; but he also gave less. He held that there must be a National Church; and, that it is

¹ Baxter MSS. (Treatises), III, f. 199. The 'large confutation' occurs in Part IV, Christian Politics, pp. 10–14, of the *Directory*; and it should be noticed that all the passages criticized by Baxter—except one—were taken from the 8th Book, which evidently he accepted as no less authentic than the rest, a point open to doubt.

² Consequently, he was prepared to acknowledge the divine right of a Cromwellian dynasty, if Providence had so willed.

the King or sovereign who makes it national. He is what Baxter calls the *Forma informans, specifica et unifica*, at once of Church and State. Church and State are but aspects of the same entity, the Nation. As centred in the King or sovereign for the purposes of civil government the Nation is the State; as centred in him for the purposes of the Kingdom of God, it is the Church. Materially, the two are one and one in him; but one in him under Christ. For the ruler of a Christian kingdom ought himself to be a Christian, and regard his realm as a Christocracy. His own will cannot rightly be his rule, but the will of God; and his principal aim should be to see that all the laws of the Church and their administration are, as far as possible, expressive of that supreme standard. Thus Baxter was an idealist, and his idealism coloured his whole outlook. Much is explained if we bear it in mind. But its radical weakness is evident. For, granted its abstract truth, its practical effectiveness depended upon the character of the King. A bad king 'and a good church could not go together. Baxter, as *our* quotations will show, had to realize this to his deep distress. But he did not realize that the right alternative might be—not that tyranny of Pope, Prelate or Presbyter which he dreaded, but those voluntary societies of Christian people, owning no special subjection to Pope, Prelate, Presbyter or King, which he dreaded more. He thought these were haunts of democracy, and so they may be; but, if they are true to themselves, they embody, in its simplest and purest form, that direct relation of men to Christ, individually and collectively, which he would not have denied to be the very soul of the Protestant witness.¹

1. A national Church is identical with a Christian kingdom, under a Christian sovereign-Magistrate, and the subjects of the Kingdom are the members of the Church, worshipping God (ordinarily) in true particular pastoral Churches.
2. Christ decreed this—'He offered (the Jews) to be King over them as a holy national Kingdom-Church' (Matt. ii. 2; xxvii. 11).
3. In embryo, Israel was such a Church. When rejected by the Jews, he commissioned his Apostles to preach the

¹ What follows is condensed from the last six chapters of *National Churches*.

Gospel to nations; and disciple nations. In due time the kingdoms of the world were made the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ¹ (Rev. xi. and xix.). Kings are to be the Church's nursing Fathers. Christ is King of Kings, and not of single persons only. 'But what need there any other proof, while all Christians confess that all kings are bound to be Christian kings and to promote Christianity to their power, and all magistrates and subjects to be Christians: and are not they, then, bound to be Christian kingdoms, i.e. National Churches?'

Hence (a) it is a mischievous error to tempt Kings and Magistrates, as the clergy have done, to think they are but civil officers, and have not much need to be very studious to understand the Scriptures; but must leave that to Bishops and Priests, and take it on their words.

(b) The independent Separatists, etc., are guilty of a profound mistake when they cry down national Churches with scorn; and turn away from national concord into endless discords and sects while, at the same time, they pray and wait for national Churches in the Millennium, as the Fifth Monarch.

(c) The error of Erastus was not his being for the Government of Princes, but his taking down the power of the Kings too much.

(d) A Christian Kingdom and Church, as such (though tolerating infidels and heathen), consisteth of no denizens, burgesses or men free, and empowered, in matters of religion, but such as are baptized, or openly professed Christians (and their children).

(e) The appropriating the name of the Church to the clergy, as distinct from the laity, is the plot or part of popish tyranny and fallacy: implying, falsely, that the national Church must be specified and unified by a priestly Head.

(f) The present orthodox Protestant Nonconformists are as truly members of the Church of England, justly so called, as any Diocesans or Conformists in the land; and, if they be not better confuted than they have been, they may truly be said to

¹ This happened (he thought) when Constantine declared himself a Christian and established Christianity as the imperial religion.

be the soundest, most judicious, and most conscionable, and the most peaceable members of this Church. And to deny such Nonconformists to be true and honourable parts of the Church of England is but such an effect of ignorant arrogance and slander as is the shame of the speaker; and im plieth some dishonourable definition of the said Church. And they that make their mutable forms and ceremonies essential to the Church, make a ceremony of the Church itself, and cannot answer the Papists that challenge us to prove its antiquity. Our liturgy is not so old as Luther's time (cp. p. 60, § 16).

In a national Church, ruled by a christian King, administered by a 'sober godly' clergy, and based on the simple essentials of doctrine, the problem of toleration of Dissenters would not arise. For there would be few Dissenters to tolerate. A united ministry, excelling in piety and worth and works, would 'force to silence reproachers—nay, the sober understanding laity would follow them, and so strengthen them that the tolerated (even) though pious and zealous in their way, would dwindle away in a little time, as full experience hath proved in this land'.

There is, therefore, no higher form of a Church than the National (Chap. XIV, pp. 58–69); but at the same time none so liable to fatal diseases—of which the chief is, 'the increase and abounding of sin'.

'O how dangerous, then, is the case. of England, in which the sin of adultery and fornication is commonly said to be so increased that multitudes are guilty now, for one that was ever suspected of it before the reign of King Charles the second; and brutish wretches scarce take it for a shame. O what a torrent of guilt in the reign of Charles the second did from King and Court overflow this land, by the shameless filth of all uncleanness! When men shall affectedly keep whores as the way to please the Court by conformity to the King, as it were an honour, or no great dishonour! What can be expected from such horrid wickedness but public, divine, revenging Justice? 'Great is the advantage that supreme Rulers have to put the name of evil upon good and of good on evil, and to procure the vulgar to say as they say.' 'The foolish words of Princes seem wise to ignorant flatterers.' 'In England . . . the King and rich

Patrons . . . have the choice of Archbishops, Bishops, Deans and Pastors; and can it be expected that bad men and covetous men, and the haters of serious piety, should choose men that will promote the doctrine and practice which they hate?' And 'the great cause of the ruin of a national Church is the ignorance, viciousness, pride, malignity, covetousness, and persecuting cruelty, of a degenerate carnal, worldly clergy'. 'It is not an honourable office, or a Reverend garb and name and title, that will hide the shame of ignorance, ungodliness, sensuality or malignity. Their white clothing and sacred titles, will render their filthiness more visible and odious. Bad men will prove a greater injury to sacred offices than open enemies. And it is not the holiness of the office or the goodness of laws and order, that will serve to reform or make happy a Church or Nation in the hands of wicked men. Therefore, when Bishops shall be *such*, who ordain and govern the inferior clergy, that Church or Nation is near lost and ruined. If bad Princes choose bad Prelates; and they ordain bad ministers; and, favouring nothing but wealth and reputation, shall prove the zealous adversaries of piety, and persecutors of the most serious Christians and encouragers of the malignant, vicious and profane, that Church and Nation is next to dead, though it has a name to live and be called honourable and rich, how comely so ever its order and ornaments may be, and though its doctrine and profest opinions be orthodox.'

We will add to this what may be described as his last appeal¹ (in the strain of *Gildas Salvianus*) to a distracted Church and Nation. The keynote is repentance.

'It is so necessary a work to repent, necessary to the sinners and necessary to this land, that a dying minister of Christ (who daily lamenteth his own sin) should not, for fear of the anger or reviling of the impenitent, omit so necessary a work, while *danger* and yet *hope* seem to tell us that *this is the time*.

Having oft done it to the displeasing of many, I will, though it yet displease, add this brief warning:

(1) If the remembrance of the years 1643 to 1660; of all that was done in *England, Wales and Scotland*, against order, peace,

¹ Concluding paragraphs of the book *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (about March 30, 1691), pp. 540-542.

government, ministry, sound doctrine and discipline, by the sectarian Army and Antinomian, Anabaptist, and separating ministers and people that encouraged them; and the fatal end they came to, without any bloodshed to overcome them and the consequent changes: I say, if all this convince not the separating sectarian sort of professors, that they have been heinously injurious to the Protestant interest, and have ignorantly kept up the life of Popish hopes, I know not what means can convince such men.

(2) And if, after all the miseries of former divisions and uncharitable violence before and in the wars, those that have added the greatest burdens, and revengefully done what I love not so oft to mention, by laws, execution, and additional reproach, upon Corporations, Churches, Universities, Ministers; and brought, and yet keep, the land, by resolved obstinacy, in its divided dangerous sinful state; and lock up their Church door against desired unity and concord; and all this for nothing but to justify the revengeful changers, and their own complying acts, I say again and again, if all this, after the last thirty years experience, added to all before, seem to the guilty no wrong to the Protestant interest, nor to the Nation's peace and hope, nor any advantage to Popery, nor any sin against Christ in his servants, the Lord take some extraordinary effectual way to convince, heal and save so blind and obdurate a people: for I see no hope of ordinary means.

The God of Peace have mercy upon an ignorant, un peaceable world, and prepare us by Faith, Hope and Love for the world of Love and Peace. Amen.'

CHAPTER 4
BAXTERIANISM

BAXTER was a prophet of moderation and gave offence on that account. 'The Church is never distracted more by anything than projects of moderation', cried Dr Saywell, Bishop Gunning's chaplain.¹

Here the moderation decried refers to Baxter's suggestions for such a change of Church order as would go far to satisfy mere Nonconformists like himself. In this desire for comprehension, as we have seen, he had many sympathisers who might be called his followers, and so Baxterians. To others the name might be applied because they accepted his moderate statement of essential Christianity, or his plea for the authority of the Scriptures, unfettered by dogmatic human explanations, or his doctrine of toleration, which steered a middle course between liberty of expression for all opinions, on the one hand, and liberty for nothing but alleged orthodoxy on the other. The number of his adherents under one, or other, or all, of these heads, made up a considerable army during his lifetime, and it did not grow less for many years after his death. It was the influence of his attitude towards the Bible, for example, which divided the Salters Hall Conference (1719) into subscribers and non-subscribers. But, chiefly, it was his theology which may be said to have created a Baxterian School; and it is his mark, in this respect, which remains more legible than any other, if we try to trace him amid the tangled creeds of the eighteenth century. Nor does it seem open to doubt that his mark will be found mostly on those broader-minded Presbyterians—beginning, say, with Daniel Williams or even Matthew Sylvester—who, more or less unwittingly, opened the way to the Arian movement which, in due course, brought forth modern Unitarianism. Baxter himself would have been the last to imagine that any aspect of his teaching could by any means, lead fairly to such an issue; but the process of transition, though not always obvious, is not very difficult to discern. This, however, is outside my present scope. All I want to do now is to make clear, as briefly as possible, his relation to

¹ *The True History of Councils* . . . (1682), p. 192.

current orthodoxy; and then, at somewhat greater length, his remarkable system of natural theology. Enough has been said already about the commotion excited by his modified view of Justification by faith. This pursued him, on and off, from the publication of his *Aphorisms* in 1650 till his death, and after. It partly occasioned what I take to be the first appearance of the name ‘Baxterianism’ in a brochure entitled, ‘*The Paraselene dismantled—or—Baxterianism barefaced—drawn from a literal transcript of Mr Baxter—and the judgment of others—in the most radical doctrines of faith—compared with those of the orthodox—both Conformist and Nonconformist—and transferred over by way of test unto the Papist and Quaker*’ (1699).

In nine points his orthodoxy is impeached—especially in the foresaid doctrine of Justification; and, in all, he is said to be allied to Quakerism or Popery! Then an old friend, or at least correspondent, of Baxter’s—Alexander Pitcairn¹ (1621–95) (Principal of St Mary’s, St Andrews), is called up to wail over him—‘O Reverend Baxter for what, or to what good, hast thou wrote so many volumes for thy conditional justification by faith and obedience? To how many contentions hast thou given occasion? How many precious hours hast thou lost thyself and thy reverend brethren? Into an abyss of how many anti-Gospel errors are they now sunk who glory in thee as their guide and patron?’ and so on. Whereupon Mr Edwards, for his part, exclaims—‘Had the orthodox Presbyterian party but dealt with Mr Baxter as faithfully . . . without soothing and self-exalting phrases and titles, which tended but to puff him up . . . as Dr Owen has done with Mr John Goodwin in his *Treatise of Perseverance* . . . this Baxterian Divinity with its speckled wings—possibly at *captum humanum*—would not have dilated itself so, to the impoisoning of the Nation, heartening and hardening of our enemies . . . and saddening of the hearts of many thousands in our Israel, if not to the distracting of the minds and spirits of many upright, plain and simple-minded men, as it is to be feared it has done’. Which serves to show, at any rate, that Baxter, eight years after his death, was very much alive.² The mention of John Goodwin, the Arminian

¹ See Baxter MSS. (Letters), i, 185^{ab} (July 12, 1673).

² The author of the book was ‘Thomas Edwards, Esq.’ (1652–1721?), see *D.N.B.* It runs to 431 pp. closely printed, large 8vo.

Independent, reminds one of Baxter's peculiar standpoint with regard to the most hotly contested question of his age. Certainly he was not an Arminian in the sense of John Goodwin, though more than once he defended him from the unjust attacks of ignorance and prejudice; nor was he, strictly speaking, a Calvinist, though he applauded the Synod of Dort, and the Westminster Assembly and shared, to the full, the Puritan admiration of Calvin. What, then, was he? Perhaps the Rev. Robert Baillie, one of the Scottish commissioners to the Westminster assembly and the writer of letters about its proceedings which were afterwards published—is not far from the truth. He charged him with being a disciple of the famous French theologian, Amyraldus or Amyraut (1596–1664), and deplored the fact. Thus, writing from Glasgow on November 29, 1658, to the Rev Simeon Ashe, a common friend of himself and Baxter, he says: 'My main purpose to you at this time, is to let you know that Mr Baxter does us more harm than all your sectaries. The man's piety and parts make us still honour, pity and spare him; but his intolerable boldness, after his avowed Amiraldisme, to follow and go beyond miserable John Goodwin, in confounding the great head of Justification with such a flood of new and unsound notions, does vex us.

'Since, this same year, he has written so largely, in this point, against Mr Burgess, we earnestly desire that he would seriously reply, yea, that Dr Reynolds, or if you have any other abler pen, would take him to task in all his errors; which truly he has a way to insinuate more than any heretodox I know in this side of the sea. I entreat that some of you would advise how to get this dangerous evil remedied, or at least stopped.'¹

Baxter took note of this charge as made, not by Baillie but by Ludovicus Molinreus² who, 'for the disgracing of Amyraldus by the smallness of his success', had pointed to Baxter 'as his only proselyte in England'. A double mistake, said Baxter. For Amyraldus has many more than one prose-

¹ Other like references to Baxter are in the Letters of Dec. 31, 1655, to Mr. Ashe (where a piece of his writing is said to be stuffed with gross Arminianism); Sept. 1, 1656, to Mr Spang at Middelburgh, and June, 1658, to same.

² Better known as Louis du Moulin (1606–1680). In Preface to his *Parænesis ad ædificatores Imperii in Imperio* (1656).

lyte in England. In fact, ‘I meet with so many of Amyraldus’ mind, in the point of universal Redemption, that, if I might judge of all the rest by those of my acquaintance, I should conjecture that half the divines in England are of that opinion’. These surely are ‘more than unus Baxterius’. But if it were so, then Amyraldus has not even one proselyte, seeing that Baxter himself arrived at the same judgment on the point of universal Redemption before ever he saw anything of Amyraldus; and wrote a book in support thereof as early as 1654.¹ Nevertheless, ‘I should think it a great benefit if I had the opportunity of sitting at the feet of so judicious a man as I perceive Amyraldus to be’.

The article in the *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* on Amyraldus by the late Principal Lindsay expounds the spring and scope of his peculiar difference very clearly.

Unbounded admiration for Calvin’s ‘Institutio’ turned him (says Dr Lindsay) from law to theology. As student, pastor and professor at Saumur it became the chief business of his life to state and vindicate Calvin’s real meaning over against that perversion of it which had grown prevalent. The following is Dr Lindsay’s summary:

The master-thought of the *Institutio* is not predestination, but the ‘thought of the *purpose of God* moving slowly down the ages making for redemption and the establishment of the Kingdom of God’. ‘It was a thought full of life and movement and had for issue a living thing, the Kingdom of God’—a thing impossible to define or sum up in a few dry propositions.

But if a keen and narrow intellect, coming to Calvin’s theology, fastens on its nerve thought of purpose, and manipulates it according to the presuppositions and formulæ of the second-rate metaphysics within which his mind works it is possible to transform the thought of purpose into a theory of predestination which will master the whole system of theological thinking. This is what the reformed scholastics did with the experimental theology of the sixteenth century. They made it a

¹ Not published before 1694 (by Joseph Reade); and kept back for several reasons, but chiefly because its place seemed to be better, or sufficiently, filled by others. He mentions, e.g. Dr Twiss, Bishop Usher, and Richard Vines—though the last was one of the presumably ‘orthodox’ whom Baillie asked Simeon Ashe to ‘set on’ Baxter. The quotations are from Baxter’s Preface to his ‘Certain Dissertations of Right to Sacraments . . .’ (1658), cp. his ‘Confutation’ of Molinæus (1654).

second-rate metaphysic, dominated by what they called the Divine decree, which in effect simply substituted the Aristotelian category of substance for the experimental theology of the Reformation age. Amyraldus felt that the first thing to be done was to break through this ring-fence, within which the metaphysic of the time made all theological thought move. The attempt made before him, which went by the name of Arminianism, did not appeal to him. It had nothing to do with the experimental theology of Calvin and was simply the revolt of a shallower metaphysic against a deeper. He accepted the decision of the Synod of Dordrecht (1618). But he wished to bring theology back to life, to connect it with the needs of men and women. *Hypothetical universalism*, or the double reference theory of the Atonement, was the special doctrine of Amyraut; and this meant that the essential nature of God is goodness, i.e. love *plus* morality—love limited by the conditions which the universal moral law must impose upon it. This Divine goodness shines forth on man in Creation, and in Providence, which is simply Creation become continuous. But sin has, through man, entered into creation and has destroyed the true end and aim of man's life. In presence of sin God's goodness shines on, but it must, from its very nature as love *plus* morality, take a somewhat different form. It becomes righteousness, which is goodness in the presence of sin; and this righteousness demands the atonement, Christ's work of satisfaction, through which men are saved from the consequences of their sin. The goodness of God remains unchanged; it is seen in the desire to *save*; but the presence of sin has made it appear under a special form—viz.—the Atonement, or work of Christ. God's eternal purpose was to save. Redemption' through Christ is the carrying out of his purpose in the way necessitated by sin; and, theoretically, it is as wide as the purpose, and so is universal. On this supposition, the Gospel must be preached. All men must be invited to repent and believe. But when we see that some men do die unrepentant and, therefore, are not saved, we see that the theoretically universal reference is hindered by this fact. That is, the universal reference is hypothetical; it is the limited reference to the elect that is practical and real. 'Christ's work has real reference only to the some who are saved.'

On the whole, no better statement could be desired of Baxter's corresponding position—only, one needs to add that the hypothetical element, however necessary to the logic of his thought, never seems to have occurred to him in preaching. He always dealt with men as if, somehow, they were masters of their own fate; nay, he must have felt that the very nerve of his appeal 'to men was paralysed had he not believed in their power to choose, or refuse, the offer of salvation. All his practical works take this power for granted; and what he is so fond of saying about the presence in every man of some degree of 'general grace' points to the theoretical ground upon which he fell back, when he tried to explain his inconsistency. General grace—answering to the Quaker's inward light—grace enough, in every man, to quicken the understanding into a clear perception of saving truth, and thereby move the will to the obedience of faith, and so to conversion—this, at any rate, was Baxter's working hypothesis from first to last. Experience verified it abundantly in his case; but, to the orthodox Calvinist, it proved him an Arminian. Nor perhaps could Amyraldus have quite fitted it into his scheme. So much for Baxter's relation to orthodoxy. His divergence from it was all in the direction of a freer Evangelism, and did not prevent him from retaining what he held to be the substantial truth of Calvinism together with due regard to elements of truth in Arminianism.

Far more interesting, however, for its bearing on his general intellectual attitude, is Baxter's treatment of natural religion.

Here he shows himself truly a modernist, if a modernist may be described as one who is resolved to get at the facts; and is sure that the facts are discoverable by an honest use' of reason; and applies his reason fearlessly to the evidence for religion; and comes, at length, to a religious faith which reason can approve, though it may still leave ample margins of mystery.

In this respect, he stands nearer to the Cambridge Platonists, especially Benjamin Whichcote,¹ than to any other of his contemporaries. It is quite in their manner when he writes: 'God hath made Reason essential to our nature: it is not our *weak-*

¹ Whom he sometimes went to hear at St Lawrence Jewry, and seems to have known.

ness but our natural excellency, and his image on our nature. Therefore, he never called us to renounce it, or lay it by: for we have no way to know Principles but by an intellectual discerning of them in their proper evidence; and no way to know conclusions by, but by a rational discerning their necessary connection to those principles. If God would have us know without reason, he would not have made us reasonable creatures. Man hath no way of mental discerning or knowledge, but by understanding things in their proper evidence. To know without this were to know without knowledge! Faith is an act, or species of knowledge: it is so far from being contrary to reason that it is but an act of clear elevated reason. It is not an act of immediate intuition of God, or Jesus Christ himself, but a knowledge of the truth by the divine evidence of its certainty. They that wrangle against us for giving reason for our religion, seem to tell us that they have none of their own, or else reprehend us for being men'.¹ We can see why he was not in favour with the dogmatists—'a sort of overwise and over-doing divines' (he says) 'who will tell their followers in private, where there is none to contradict them, that the method of this Treatise is perverse, as appealing too much to natural light, and overvaluing human reason; and that I should have done no more but shortly tell men that all that God speaketh in his word is true; and that *propria luce* it is evident that the Scripture is the Word of God; and that to all God's elect, he will give his Spirit to cause them to discern it; and that this much alone had been better than all these disputes and reasons. But these over-wise men, who need themselves no reason for their religion, and judge accordingly of others, and think that those men who rest not in the authority of Jesus Christ, should rest in theirs, are many of them so well acquainted with me as not to expect that I should trouble them in their way, or reason against them who speak against reason even in the greatest matters which our reason is given us for. As much as I am given to scribbling, I can quickly dismiss this sort of men, and love their zeal without the labour of opening their ignorance'.²

This is taken from a Treatise which bears the title, *The*

¹ *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* . . . p. 259.

² *Ibid.*, p. 491.

Reasons of the Christian Religion—in two parts: the first treating ‘of Godliness’, the second ‘of Christianity’. The former undertook to prove by natural evidence ‘the Being of God, the necessity of holiness, and a future life of retribution, the sinfulness of the world, the desert of Hell, and what hope of recovery mercies intimate’. Thus it would seem as if natural evidence was expected to prove the whole contents of Christianity, though the second part would add some evidence supernatural. And this is really what we find. In the light of reason all creatures, and especially ourselves, declare the being and all the attributes of God.

Such is his conclusion from an ascending series of self-evidencing principles. In the light of reason, also, the law of nature discloses itself as a revelation of the whole duty of man—in its grounds and range—towards God, towards himself, and towards his fellows. Baxter’s table of duties, prescribed by nature and commended to reason, runs to forty-four items; and covers the Sermon on the Mount no less than the ten Commandments. Thus, No. 36 is this—‘Nature teacheth us that it is our duty to love human nature in our enemies and pity others in their infirmities and miseries, and to forgive all pardonable failings, and not to seek revenge and right ourselves by our brother’s ruin; but to be charitable to the poor and miserable, and do our best to succour them, and help them out of their distress’. And No. 43 runs—‘Nature telleth us that this obedient pleasing of our Maker, and holy, righteous, charitable and sober living, should be our greatest pleasure and delight; and that we should thus spend our lives even to the last, waiting patiently in peaceful joyful hopes for the blessed end, which our righteous Governour hath allotted for our reward’.¹ Nay, the light of nature leads at last even to the mystic’s creed. ‘Thus, hath reason shewed us the end and highest felicity of man in his highest duty: to know God, to love him, and delight in him in the fullest perfection, and to be loved by him, and be fully pleasing to him, as herein bearing his image, is the felicity and *ultimate* end of man. Love is man’s final act, excited by the fullest knowledge; and God, so beheld and enjoyed in his love to us, is the final object. And here the

¹ *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* . . . p. 80.

soul may seek its rest'.¹ Well might he say, therefore, that the law of nature comprehends 'the first and principal part' of Christianity—though this presents that law 'in the most clear and legible character, superadding much more which naturalists know not'. In other words, as he says in effect elsewhere, Christianity did not need to do more than sharpen the vision of truths already revealed, and reinforce them by opening up fresh springs of moral power. Which was precisely the teaching of Benjamin Whichcote and John Smith.

Nothing indeed, can more surely dispel the notion of Baxter as a hard-shell scripturalist, with no outlook on God except through the window of some text, than the reading of those passages which flowed from his pen under the influence of nature. There were many Puritans undoubtedly of the hard-shell type; but Baxter was never one of them. Especially does he seem to have been impressed with the fact of God by his contemplation of the heavens. Here, e.g. is a passage which shows that he looked at the heavens not merely through the words of the 19th Psalm, but with the very heart of the Psalmist. To him, as to the Psalmist, they were a living voice of God.

'Though Supernatural revelation far exceedeth the mere light of Nature, and the teaching of the Creation, yet the difficulty of learning and speaking *many* languages, without which we cannot preach abroad in the world, and the universal wars about words that take up and corrupt mankind, do make me read the 19th *Psalm* with great regard, and not think so hardly as I have been tempted to do, of God's dealing with the heathen and generality of mankind, while the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy works, while day unto day utters knowledge, and while sun, moon and stars do preach God with so loud a voice, and their sound goeth through all the world, and there is no nation or tongue where their sound is not heard: and it is not a syllable or letter, an accent or an emphasis that doth obscure their sense. And they all tell the world that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and that the invisible things of God are seen

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

by the things that are made; and in him we live, move and have our being; and that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. It is most legible in the book of nature and providence that God useth all the world upon terms of mercy, and not according to the utmost desert of sin; and that this mercy should lead them to repentance; and that God is infinitely good; and therefore, to be loved above all; and that he that truly loveth God shall not lie in Hell and be separated from him.’¹

In the following his conception takes a wider range:

‘Think but what a wonderful fabrick he hath made of all the orbs, composed into one world! and can you possibly have narrow thoughts of his goodness? He hath placed more physical goodness in the nature of one silly bird or fly or worm than human wit is able to find out; much more in plants, in beasts, in men, in sea and land, in the sun and fixed stars and planets. Our understandings are not acquainted with the thousandth thousandth thousandth part of the physical goodness which he hath put into his creatures. There may be more of the wonderful skill and power and goodness of God, laid out on one of those stars that seems smallest to our sight, than millions of human intellects, if united, were able to comprehend. And who knoweth the number anymore than the magnitude and excellency of those stars. What man can once look up towards the firmament in a star-light night, or once read a treatise of Astronomy, and then compare it with his Geography, and compare those far more excellent orbs with this narrower and darker world we live in, and not be wrapt up into the astonishing admiration of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator? When the anatomizing of the body of one man, or beast, might wrap up any considerate man into Galen’s admiration and praises of the Maker! and how many myriads of such bodies hath God created? And how much more excellent are the forms, or souls, than any of those bodies? And how little know we how incomparably more excellent the nature of angels may be than ours? And what glorious beings may inhabit the more glorious orbs? And yet can you think meanly

¹ *The Scripture Gospel defended* . . . Prologue, § 3 (1690).

of the Creator's goodness?'¹ A variation on the same theme, almost lyrical in its eloquence, is this final passage:

'Doubtless as the Soul, while it dwelleth with flesh, doth receive its objects by the mediation of sense, so God hath purposely put such variety of sensible delicacies into the creature, that by every sight and smell and hearing and touch and taste, our souls might receive a report of the sweetness of God, whose goodness all proceed from. And, therefore, this is the life which we should labour in continually, to see God's goodness in every lovely sight, and to taste God's Goodness in every pleasant taste, and to smell it in every pleasant odour, and to hear it in every lovely word or sound; that the motion may pass on clearly without stop, from the senses to the mind and will, and we may never be so blockish as to gaze on the glass and not see the image in it; or to gaze on the image, and never consider whose it is: or to read the book of the Creation, and mark nothing but the words and letters, and never mind the sense and meaning. A Philosopher, and yet an atheist or ungodly, is a monster; one that most readeth the book of Nature and least understandeth or feeleth the meaning of it.'²

By the light of nature, then, we may see that God is, and what he is, and the whole compass of our duty in its various relations. But by the same light we may see, also, what sin is—its origin, its nature, its extent. Nay, we may see how its malignancy is such as to require and ensure the everlasting punishment of the impenitent.³ His argument here might fitly be called an after-thought. It seems to aim at making probable what he believed Christ to have revealed as certain; and its chief interest lies in the fact that it marks an advance in his thought. Once he had pictured Hell in terms of material fire." But now he conceives it as a state of spiritual despair, due to the total absence of God, and the presence of tormenting memory, and the knowledge that there is no remedy.

Baxter's logic was all right, given his premises; and he felt himself bound by it. But when he lets an objector cry out in

¹ *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* . . . pp. 97, 98.

² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 156–75.

⁴ See, e.g. *True Christianity or Christ's Absolute Dominion* . . . (1654), pp. 282–6.

this strain: 'We come into the world in weakness, and in a case in which we cannot help ourselves, but are a pity and trouble to others! We are their trouble that breed us and bring us up. We are vexed with unsatisfied desires, with troubling passions, with tormenting pains, and languishing weakness, and enemies' malice; with poverty and care; with losses and crosses, and shame and grief, with hard labours and studies; with the injuries and spectacles of a Bedlam world, and with fears of death; and death at last . . . and you tell us of a Hell for most of us at last. Is all this the fruit of perfect Goodness', or consistent with that name—Our Father which art in Heaven—which includeth (you say) all God's relations to us; and specially expresseth his love and graciousness?'¹ Logic returned the cold answer that the goodness of God had been already proved; had been set among 'the plainest certain truths'; and so must not be questioned by any poor agonized human soul. Can one doubt, however, that the soul's cry, just quoted, was his own?

But on another closely related theme—the moral argument 'for a life of retribution after this'—he is on surer ground and is much more convincing. His main points are these:

1. Might is too often regarded as right.

'Ordinarily all things here come alike to all. And what justice would be done upon any rebels or robbers that are but strong enough to bear it out? Or upon any that raise unrighteous wars, and burn to murder, and destroy countries and cities, and are worse than plagues to all places where they come, and worse than mad dogs and bears to others? If they do but conquer, instead of punishment for all this villainy, they go away here with wealth and glory.'²

2. The worst sins often go unpunished or undetected.

'The sensual that have wit enough so far to bridle their lusts as to preserve their health, do usually live longer than more obedient men; and they deny themselves none of those fleshly pleasures which the obedient do commonly abstain from.'³

'The heart may be guilty of atheism, blasphemy, idolatry, malice, contrivements and desires of treason, murder, incest, adultery, fraud, oppression and all the villainy in the world, and

¹ *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* . . . pp. 95–6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 128, cf. p. 145.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

no man know or punish it; and God doth not do it ordinarily in this life, with any sufficient act of justice. So, also, all those sins which men are but able to hide, as secret murders, treasons, revenge, slanders, fraud, etc., do escape all punishment from man. And God hath no observable ordinary course of outward justice in this world, but what he exerciseth by man (though extraordinarily he sometime otherwise interpose). And how easy and ordinary it is for subtle men to do much wickedness and never be discovered, needs no proof. The like we may say of those *secret duties* of heart and life, which have neither reward nor notice in this life; and, if observed, are usually turned into matter of reproach.¹

3. We are all under the sway of 'motives which are fetched from another life'. 'Let every reader but consult with his own soul and (though it be granted that virtue should be chosen for its own sake, how dear so ever it may cost, yet) let him, without lying, say what he thinketh he should be and do in case of temptations, if he knew that he had no life to live but this.' Would not the knowledge of such a fact 'weaken the hands of the best'?²

4. It is the best of men who most desire the fruition of a life to come. 'The consciences of all Good men are my witnesses; whose desires to know God better, to love Him and please him more, and to enjoy his Love is as the very pulse and breath of their souls. For this they groan and pray and seek; for this they labour, wait and suffer. If you could help them to more of the knowledge and love of God, you would satisfy them more than to give them all the wealth and honours of the world. Their religious lives, their labours, prayers, contemplations and sufferings, prove all this, and shew for what they long and live.'³

5. In the widest sense our nature inclines 'to a perfecter state'.

'We feel in our natures a capacity of knowing all that of God which I have before laid down, and that it is improvable by further light to know much more. We feel that our hearts are capable of loving him, and of delighting in the glory of his perfections; and we find all other things so far below the ten-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

dency of our faculties, and the contentment of our minds that we know that *this is it* that we were made for, and *this* is the proper use that our *understandings* and *wills* were given us for. And we find that we attain not any *such perfection* in *this life* as we are *capable* of and do desire; but that our increase of virtue and holiness is an increase of our desires after more; and the better any man is, the more he still desireth to *be better*; and the more he knoweth and loveth and delighteth in God, the more he desireth it in a far higher degree. And even of our *knowledge of nature* we find that the more we know, the more we would know; and that he that knoweth the *effect* would naturally fain *know the cause*; and that when he knoweth the *nearer cause*, he would know the *cause of that*, and so know the *first cause*, *God himself*. And the little that we here attain to of knowledge, love and delight, is far short of the perfection, in the same kind, which our faculties incline unto.¹

6. But surely ‘God who maketh *nothing* in vain, made not *man* in vain, nor his *natural inclination* to his *own perfection*. His *will* is signified by his *works*. As a man that makes a *knife* or *sword* or *gun* or *ship* doth tell you what he maketh it for, by the usefulness and form of it, so, when God made man with faculties fitted to *know* and *love* him, he shewed you that he made him for that use, and that therein he would employ him’.² And ‘this, taken in with the wisdom and goodness of his nature, will tell any man, that to be a loser finally by our *obedience* to God is a thing that no man need to fear. He doth not serve himself upon us to our hurt; nor command us that which will undo us. He wanteth neither power, wisdom, nor goodness to make us gainers by our duty. It is the desire of natural justice in all, *ut bonis benefit et malis male*. If I find but any duty commanded me by God, my conscience and my sense of the divine perfections, will not give me leave to think that I shall ever prove finally a loser by performing it, though he had never made me any promise of reward. So far the law of nature hath a kind of promise in it, that if he do but say, Do this, I will not doubt but the doing of it is for my good! And if he bid me but use any means to my own happiness, I should blaspheme if I

1 *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* . . . p. 141.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

suspected it would tend to my loss and misery, and was made my snare'.¹

None of these points in his argument for 'a life of retribution after this' is original; nor does Baxter claim that they are. On the contrary, he places the peculiar force of them in the fact that they were written by the hand of God upon the face of nature; and have ever been legible to the seeing eye. Hence, he sought and found his witnesses chiefly among the ancient heathen moralists—whom vulgar Christian apologists mentioned only to denounce. Just because of their position outside the range of Judaism and Christianity, they the better served his purpose, which was to demonstrate the natural and universal grounds of religious faith and moral obligation. In this he anticipated, if he did not initiate, the apologetic method which, on the part of one-sided thinkers worked out too often into deism. At the same time, he anticipated what to-day is recognized as the greatest need of Apologetic—viz.—so to present Christianity as to make clear that it is no abnormal or isolated phenomenon, but deep rooted in the soul of man; and vitally related to the truth in every other movement by which the soul has been drawn towards the knowledge and service of God.

I may be mistaken, but I am inclined to say again that Baxter, in this respect, had none like him among his contemporaries, except the Cambridge Platonists.

There is indeed no reference by name to any of the Platonists; and this, perhaps, may show that he had not read them. But his standpoint was theirs, and their favourite authorities were his. It would take a long time to count the number of his quotations from Plato and particularly Plotinus. He was one with them, too, in his deep respect for the Stoics rather than the Epicureans; and the marrow of a discursive 'Defence of the Soul's Immortality' which forms the 'conclusion' (in 114 pages) of his book is much the same as that of John Smith's more stately and eloquent defence. They were, in fact, opposing the same objectors. Materialism, of the licentious sort, basing itself on an Epicurean view of the world, was in full flood; and the Platonic, braced by the Stoic teachers, still offered the best antidote. Another favourite of his, as of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

the Cambridge men, was Marsilio Ficino. But his prime favourite, strange to say, was Cicero. Even Seneca, whom he seems to have known by heart and had ready for use at every turn, falls behind him. In a single chapter he quotes Aristotle (2), Plato (2), Plutarch (2), Plautus, Menander, Marsilio Ficino (2), Marcus Antoninus, Seneca (5), Laertes (10); but, at least 33 of his citations—some of considerable length—are from Cicero, and from about a dozen of his writings, though oftenest from *de legibus*. Once or twice his reference is simply—*Cicero*—as if he were relying on memory; and so he was. For ‘being many years separated from my books I was forced to do this part less exactly than I would have done, had I been near my own or any other Library’—a good excuse surely for occasional slips; and, also, good proof of an extraordinarily well-stored and retentive brain. In the end, he brings forward a chain of passages from the *Tusculan Disputations* to clinch all he has had to say about Immortality: ‘I have cited more’—he says—‘out of *Cicero* than any other in this Treatise, and yet when I think how far our apostates are below him, seeing they despise the words of Christ, I will once more use the words of Cicero, to convince them, shame them, or condemn them’. These together with all the other words which he has ‘cited out’ of ‘Heathens’ are meant ‘to convince or confound those that under the Gospel, with their hearts, tongues, or lives deny those truths which the light of nature hath so far made clear’. The evidence for such truths, if ‘entirely and deeply printed on the mind’, is sufficient. But it is apt to become dim. In order to remain fresh and clear it needs to be frequently reviewed. It is like a prospective glass or Telescope which helps the eye to see things otherwise unseen or obscure. ‘He that is surprised when his prospective glass or Telescope is not with him, will not see those things which by their help he saw before.’ Even so ‘the remembrance of former convictions in the general, will hardly satisfy a man against his present apprehension, though he be conscious that he had *then* more help than now’. He must often have recourse to his Telescope. Baxter speaks from experience. ‘I have found myself a far clearer apprehension of the certainty of the life to come, and of the truth of the Gospel, when I have come newly from the serious view of the entire frame of convincing

evidences than I can have at other times, when many particulars are out of the way, and much worn off my apprehensions.¹

I have confined myself in this section, to one book of Baxter's:—*The Reasons of the Christian Religion*—or rather to its first part; and the last words just quoted from it may explain why. It was written immediately after Baxter had made a long and steady use of his Telescope. He finished it October 31, 1666. He was writing the chapter on retribution 'a fortnight after London was burnt'.

He felt sure that the judgments of God were abroad in the land; that unbelief, deep and widespread, was making them of no effect; that this unbelief extended beyond the Gospel to the very existence of a living God; and that its mainspring was not merely an evil heart but a false philosophy. All the conditions, in short, were present which could summon him to review his evidences more systematically and thoroughly than ever. And the quiet time at *Acton*—the time when he wrote down the story of his life and crowned it with that exquisite self-study which he called his 'Soul-experiments'—gave him an unusual opportunity. He was, too, in the right mood for it—the mood of one who has won the fight, but not easily, not without strenuous labour, not without moments of deadly peril—and so the mood of one who has learnt, through suffering, how to be tolerant, generous and helpful towards his brothers who are still beset by the doubts he has passed. In such a mood he wrote; and its calm light lies on almost every page. Controversy of the angry or scornful kind is laid by—though words of reproof, for those deserving them, are frequent enough. Charity towards all might have been its motto—charity, especially, towards the poor souls that have lapsed into doubt, even of Christianity and the life to come, but dare not utter their doubts for fear of an anathematizing orthodoxy; and so 'remain half-infidels within, whilst the ensigns of Christ are hanged without'. They need, not blame but, help—'much help' (says Baxter), 'though they are ashamed to tell their needs; and *prudent charity will relieve those who are ashamed to beg*'.²

¹ *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* . . . 594.

² Italics mine. Preface to the *Christian Reader*.

For such souls, in the first place, he has written:

‘Though it be to my shame, I must confess, that necessity, through perplexed thoughts, hath made this subject much of my meditations. It is the subject which I have found most *necessary* and most useful to myself. And I have reason enough to think that many others may be as weak as I. And I would fain have those partake of my satisfaction, who have partaken of my difficulties.’ All he asks is ‘a diligent willing mind’. ‘Nothing is more sure than that *recipitur ad modum recipientis*.’ A lazy application to the argument will yield no benefit. The benefit will come only so far as the argument is clearly understood, and so far as it has ‘left upon the soul its proper image by an orderly and deep impression’; yea, and only so far as ‘the goodness of the matter’ has become ‘as nutriment, blood and spirits to the will’.¹

One may hope that the book found some readers of the kind he hoped for. At any rate, the book is there; and is to be classed with the three²—written near the same time—which (he says) have ‘expressed my maturest, calmest thoughts’.

It contains indeed—in a more popular form—the heart of those great folios; and is the book of all others which may be commended to anyone who may wish to know what was Baxter’s faith; and the grounds upon which he rested it; and what it meant in his own experience.

As to the full content of his faith, it should be remembered that, though nothing has been said here (for reasons given) of the second part—‘Christianity and Supernatural Revelation’—it is this to which the first part leads, as a porch into the Temple. Christianity gathered up, re-announced, confirmed, and brought home to him every strand and aspect of the truth revealed, with various degrees of clearness, by the light of nature. So he believed and so he labours to prove. Christianity was eminently true because in an eminent way it satisfied his reason. Reason was still the judge. But a part of the proof, and, as time went on, the more convincing part came through a

¹ *Ibid.*, Preface to the doubting and unbelieving Reader.

² Viz. *Catholic Theology*; *Methodus Theologiæ*; *Christian Directory*. See p. 240 of *The True History of Councils*. . . .

reasonable experience. In other words, he did not rest in an intellectual proof of Christianity. What his understanding approved, he passed on to his will; and his will translated it into obedience; and obedience brought an experience of life and light and strength and peace and joy which clothed the truth with invincible power. Baxter calls this experience the witness of the Spirit'; and it is of this—the third point mentioned above—of which he has most to say. Not a few of his other proofs—though ostensibly based on reason—are mere quicksand; and one wonders how so clear a head did not see their shifty flimsiness. It might be suggested that he did; and only used them for the sake of those to whom they were not flimsy. But we cannot believe that his scrupulous honesty would let him use any proof which seemed to him quite valueless. What, however, can be said for certain is, that the proof from experience gradually melted away the value of every other proof, by comparison; and suffused his soul with that heat and light of inward evidence which he felt to be all-sufficing. The steps of his spiritual pilgrimage are distinctly traced in nine wonderful pages.¹ Baxter was not temperamentally a mystic. The intuition of God did not come to him by a gift of nature, or easily. Intellectual doubts, born of an inveterate demand for rational proof, were always hovering near; and apt to darken the windows of his faith. But he had the single eye and the humble heart of an unfaltering obedience, and so at length he attained to something akin to the mystic's rapture. 'I feel that thou hast *made* my mind to *know* thee, and I feel thou hast made my heart to love thee, my tongue to praise thee, and all that I am and have to serve thee; and even in the panting languishing desires and motions of my soul I find that Thou, and only Thou art its resting place; and though love do now but *search* and *pray* and *cry* and *weep*, and is reaching upward but cannot reach, the glorious light, the blessed knowledge, the perfect love, for which it longeth; yet by its eye, its aim, its motions, its moans, its groans, I know its meaning, where it would be, and I know its end. My displaced soul will never be *well* till it come near to Thee, till it know Thee better, till it love Thee more. . . . Wert Thou to be found in the most solitary desert,

¹ *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, pp. 454–463.

it would seek Thee; or in the uttermost parts of the earth, it would make after Thee. Thy presence makes a crowd, a Church; Thy converse makes a closet, or solitary wood or field, to be kin to the angelical choir.’¹

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

CHAPTER 5 AN APPRECIATION

IN trying to form an estimate of Baxter one may begin by mentioning his faults, and by admitting that these were of a kind which could not fail to impair his influence.

I. 'Overdoing is undoing' was a maxim often on his lips, but while applying it to others—to his wife, e.g.—he did not seem to see the need of applying it to himself. And yet hardly anyone had more need to bear it in mind. 'Overdoing' indeed, was a besetting snare which he seldom escaped. In his treatment of a subject, the method most natural to him was the exhaustive. He could not be content just to state a point and sustain it by one or two strong arguments and then leave it to work its own way. He must present it under all aspects which occurred to him, and commend each aspect by all possible reasons and defend it against all conceivable objections, and do all this with logical precision; and so reach his end with the reader—tired or confused—far in the rear. No doubt Baxter was not singular. His way was the common Puritan abuse of the inherited scholastic way. But in Baxter's case the way was carried to a singular length. For he had the scholastic mind—analytic in the last degree, credulous of logical distinctions as answering to objective truth; and sure of the philosophy which taught that the effective means of moving the will and winning the affections is through the understanding. Moreover; the vast store of his knowledge, or at least information; its readiness to his hand at every call of memory; his unfailing command of words; and his strong emotional impulse impart—all tempted him in the same direction. Nothing more easy than to expand and ramify his theme. But overdoing meant undoing. Instance after instance might be cited to show how he missed his mark thereby. Overdone books like his *Catholic Theology*, and *Methodus Theologiæ* were not read at all. His controversial answers to this or that opponent, on such a subject as baptism or justification or church government, generally opened so many inviting side-paths that, as often as not, the combat was diverted into one or more of these, while the main issue passed out of sight. And even his de-

votional treatises, rich as they are with thoughts and passages of timeless beauty and truth, are apt to run out into so many directions, exhortations, admonitions, etc., that the cumulative effect is a burden for conscience and heart too heavy to be borne. A good illustration of this may be found in the searching and eloquent plea for the duty of ‘contemplation’—in Part IV of the *Saints Everlasting Rest*. Many an ordinary reader or hearer must have felt, if he did not say, that it was overdone. Nor is it possible to disprove the assertion that Baxter spoilt his cause, or at any rate greatly weakened the strength of his appeal to the Bishops, at the Savoy Conference in 1661 by overdoing. A mere glance at the mass of documents which he brought forward is enough. One cannot wonder that men, in their state of mind, should turn away impatiently, and (as Baxter complained) refused even to read them.

2. Akin to this fault, and a defect of the same quality, was a certain want of tact. The quality in question was a fastidious fidelity to truth. Whatever matter he might be writing or speaking about, he felt bound to utter the whole truth; and to utter it in the plainest words. He could not practise reserves of truth, or disguise its face. His motive was not that of ‘the plain blunt man’ whose frankness may be a form of rude self-assertion, still less was it of the conceited person who thinks his own opinion infallible. It was simply the conviction that whatever he had learnt to regard as the truth was not his own, but was something entrusted to him for the sake of others; was a lamp to be set on the stand, not hid under a bowl. Unadorned outspokenness, therefore, was a duty; and consequences must be left with God. But a tree is known by its fruits, and the fruits of his outspokenness, from time to time, might have taught him to reflect on the charge of Jesus ‘be wise like serpents’ as well as ‘guileless like doves’. A friend of truth will desire it to produce its due effect; and this may partly depend on the manner of its conveyance, or on circumstances of time and place, and the temper or mental preparedness of the recipient. There were occasions, now and then, when Baxter saw this. He once entreated Mr Tombes of Bewdley, e.g. to keep silence for a while about baptism, however true his

views might be, because their truth and its propagation were of less importance than the common peace. Tombes replied that peace at the cost of truth was no peace. I agree, said Baxter, but wisdom counsels silence, for the present, in this case: Speech will do more harm than good. For himself, however, he was haunted by a fear of reticence, or smooth speech, as a species of unfaithfulness. His instinctive disposition to speak out and always 'call a spade a spade' acted subconsciously on the side of his fear. Hence it came to pass, too often, that his uncompromising truthfulness both injured the truths he purposed to serve and hindered the peace he loved. Among the many instances which come to mind here is one of the most striking. It is related in a series of ten letters which passed between Baxter and Edward Eccleston—Rector of Old Swinford, Worcestershire—from July to October in 1673.¹ It is as plain as can be that Baxter was substantially right throughout. Eccleston was a young man whom Baxter had befriended and who used to profess extraordinary respect for him. Baxter had got him attached, apparently as Chaplain, to Mr Foley. 'Sometime' (before 1660) 'he sought my advice,' says Baxter, whether he should be ordained by Presbyters only. 'I persuaded him against it, lest any change should put him on the straits of reordination, etc. At his late coming to London, being told that he had some inclination to conform, I talked to him about it and shewed him twenty particulars enumerated, which nonconformists cannot consent to offering him the full proof of anyone of them, if he desired it. He spake to me as if the report was false and he had no such purpose, and said not a word against anything I offered him, nor even against any of my books written on that subject'. Yet not long after he conformed and was ordained, without a word to Baxter. There was too much reason to think that he had forced his conscience. But, at the time, Baxter tried to think otherwise; and took no notice. Then, some (over hasty) hearers of Mr Eccleston wrote to Baxter on the lawfulness of holding communion with him according to the liturgy—to whom he replied in terms of approval of the practice, and of their Pastor. At the same time, it would seem, he wrote to the

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), Vols. i, ii and v.

latter and offered him a little advice for his preaching and carriage—‘premising, on the bye, that I thought he had not dealt faithfully enough with his conscience in not hearing what could be said on both sides before he resolved’. Eccleston wrote back as if thankful, but evidently displeased, and offering to justify his course. Baxter’s return to this was a letter of exorbitant length which drew another from Eccleston, ‘in which’ (says Baxter) ‘he attempted to bring me to repentance for this and former sins, supposing my words to be from an ill nature, wretchedly censorious, and to be inhuman snarling and grinning, rendering me unfit for any wise man to meddle with. . . .’ So it goes on in letter after letter—Baxter growing cooler and more incisive, Eccleston growing more wrathful and abusive until he might be said to foam at the mouth. Well, certainly the truth of fact and the force of argument, were with the older man—thirty years older—but certainly, also, the younger man had good excuse for his resentment. Baxter could have said all he wished to say in a manner so different! The truth would have shone out just as clearly, but would have given no occasion of offence, even though it might have failed to persuade. As it was, Baxter made a bitter enemy and was painfully surprised.¹ ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀγάπῃ—‘Truth it in love’—was St Paul’s motto, and it would be unfair to say that Baxter ever lacked love; but he did lack the tact which knows how to adapt truth and its presentment to particular occasions or persons. One thinks of his sermon in St Paul’s Cathedral on the eve of the Restoration and his sermon before the King in the following July, as conspicuous examples. Both true enough and inspired by sublime moral courage, but, in each case, unsuitable and doomed to futility.

3. We may name as a third fault, if we like, the explosiveness of his temper. Baxter was by no means a placid man, though, as a rule, reason held his passion well in hand; and drove it along the channels of his preaching, or writing, in the form of moral fervour. Perhaps the heat of it sprang partly from the strong Celtic streak in his blood—to which might be traced, also, the quick sensibility which made him thrill to the

¹ See Baxter MSS. (Letters), Vol. ii, f. 210^{ab}. Letter, narrating the affair to the Rev. Thomas Wilsby and Mr Ambrose Sparry.

touch of beauty in form or sound, and sometimes wrought his prose into glowing verse. But the wild steed was not always under strict control. Now and then it broke loose and threw off its rider. In plain words, Baxter's anger could blaze up without sufficient reason, and carry him into devastating words (possibly deeds as well) before it died down. Instances are extant in his writings; but here is one (of several) from the Baxter MSS.¹

John Wilson, writing to 'his ever honoured friend Mr Richard Baxter' on July 14, 1670, is surprised at the sort of answer Baxter has written to his request for light on a difficulty, or difficulties, suggested by his 'Cure of Church Divisions'. He had looked for a calm statement; but evidently Baxter had exploded. Just then he happened to be a target for the onslaught of friends and foes because of his regular attendance at Church and defence of the practice. Mr Wilson was one of his friends who, as a Nonconformist himself, could not understand Baxter's attitude; and wrote to that effect. Whereupon Baxter—already provoked by similar remonstrants—lost his balance; and charged him (among other things) with ignorance, pride, and uncharitableness, to which Mr Wilson answered:

'Worthy Sir, I exceedingly wonder how you come to be transported into this mistake and displeasure. Was my sollicitousness for the early vindication of your name, which I have ever been ready to rise up at the mention of, a sufficient reason wherefore you should reckon me among your adversaries, and reflect upon me as one of them? As for the Congregational men, I never was one of them nor intend to be . . . but, for hearing the prayers, I know there are many persons in these nations that are neither ignorant, proud, nor uncharitable-against it. So would the old Nonconformists have been, if they had lived in these changed times. Good sir, while you plead so much for love and concord towards others, do not neglect it towards your fellow sufferers, who come far nearer to you in principles, affections, and practice than they (the

¹ (Letters), VI ff. 22–3. Wilson was 'minister of the Gospel at Backford near Chester'.

separating Nonconformists) do. . . . ‘Thus with the tender of my most humble service, I rest yours,

‘J. WILSON.’¹

Baxter’s liability to impatient outbursts seems to have been known; and to have given rise to the report that he was ‘not able to bear being gainsaid in anything’.² Some ascribed this to his lack of academic (or University) discipline in disputation,³ some to his intellectual pride. But the true cause was temperamental. Of intellectual pride he had very little—less and less as he grew older; and, if one may judge from that of his academic opponents, the discipline of the schools would not have done much for him. He had, however, a profound capacity for passionate anger; and sometimes a sudden gust of it overcame him. More than that there is no need to say except this—that what he said about his habitual self-restraint cannot be denied. ‘I justify not my patience: it is too little. But . . . judge you whether I can endure to be gainsaid, when I think there are forty books written against me . . . which for the greater part I never answered, though some of them, written by Prelatists and Papists, have spoken fire and sword. Nor to my remembrance did any or all these books, by troubling me, ever break one hour of my sleep, nor ever grieve me so much as my own sin and pain (which yet was never extreme) have grieved me one day.’⁴

4. Baxter’s faults—those now mentioned and perhaps others less conspicuous—though bad for his influence, were of no great account. They implied no deep flaw in his moral integrity. He might give way to passionate anger, but the flame died down as swiftly as it arose; and left no trace of rancour or malice. He might be unwise in practice, but his unwisdom was that of a genuine Israelite in whom is no guile. He might

¹ To another friend, Rev. Henry Oasland, of Bewdley, who disagreed with him on the same point as Wilson, Baxter wrote about the same time—June 29, 1670, very calmly, though Oasland was known to have said that no man had ‘so lost himself as Mr Baxter’. Baxter MSS. (Letters), i. f. 20^a, 22–27.

² The Bishop of Cork and Ross, e.g., was told this by a ‘great friend of Baxter’s. *The true History of Councils*, p. 227. The Bishop was Edward Wetenhall (1636–1713).

³ e.g. the friend aforesaid.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

fail of his end by overdoing, but his overdoing was little else than an error of judgment, springing from excessive anxiety to make out his case. On the other hand, when we turn from these to survey his personality as a whole, there are three features which stand out, I think, with impressive grandeur.

(1) His simplicity—in the sense of an unwavering aim. He himself would have described that aim in Puritan fashion as the glory of God—which meant that all the energies of his life should be directed to that which God approved. Christians generally, then as now, assented to this, but then as now—though not perhaps to the same extent—stopped short at assent. But Baxter's assent drew after it his whole heart. His private ambitions, whatever their object, were laid aside. He gave himself up to the will of God. Writing to James Berry (in September 1659) who was then a member of the Council of State and a distinguished Colonel of the Cromwellian army, he recalls the time, more than twenty years ago when they had been bosom-friends at Eaton Constantine; and Berry had been the one to convince him that, for him, the will of God was the ministry. '*You brought me into the Ministry.*' 'I was then very ignorant young and raw.' 'My education and initial weakness' were such as to forbid the venture. But Berry enabled him to hear the divine call. And he reminds his old friend of this fact in order to claim, very humbly, that he has never looked back from the plough. He has taken his vocation for better and worse. Its fruits of success have been great; and he can say, 'I doubt not but many thousand souls will thank you when they have here read that you were the man that led me into the Ministry'. But it has been a poor affair in a worldly respect. Had he chosen the secular, or military, way he might have grown great as well as others; and certainly he could have grown rich, if he had turned physician. The trials, too, of the ministry have increased beyond expectation; and if he laid it down his 'flesh' would rejoice. What binds him to it? Simply the will of God. And if this was his feeling in 1659 when the sheaves of his harvest field were heaped around him, what of the lean years which followed 1660? A Lord Bishop's throne was open to him; or the learned leisure of a Dean; or the position of England's most famous preacher within the Church.

Why, then, did he turn his back on a state of ‘ease and rest and joys’? why did he take his stand at the head of a long procession of suffering and unpitied souls? Why did he abide with them, and share their sorrows, and maintain their cause, and endure their frequent murmurings against him to the end of his life? Why did he yield nothing to the importunity of almost perpetual physical pain? Why did he refuse to be silenced, or to dream for a moment of seeking the remunerative safety of some other work? If there had been in him any urgency of selfish claims, upon which the Prince of this world could have fastened, his case is a mystery. But his simplicity explains it. He had committed himself to the will of God, and had no other aim than to do it. I am far from saying that his interpretation of that will was always correct. I believe that, under particular aspects, it was often wrong. But, as surely as Moses forsook the pleasures of Egypt, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, and endured as seeing him that is invisible, so Baxter, in the main trend of his life, followed, all along, the same pure light and was sustained by the same high inspiration.

(2) His moral elevation could not be hid; and it reacted on those around him in the usual way. Some found its light in their conscience unbearable, and sought out every plausible excuse for the assumption that because he was a Puritan he must be a hypocrite. L’Estrange and company were of this tribe. Others, at the opposite extreme, carried their admiration of him to the point of adoring hero-worship; while many, though akin to him in uprightness of heart, were alienated from him by exasperation at what seemed to them his ‘sinful compliances’. This was the case of the stricter separatists. But the average man was indifferent. If he took note of Baxter at all, he thought of him as a crank; excited by things of no importance in the sphere of religion and making himself a nuisance to the authorities. Religion had been settled by the King and the Bishops. Most of the clergy were content, and most of the sensible laymen. It had been made clear in the Prayer Book just what form of worship, what fasts and feasts etc. were required of them. Why raise any scruples? Why not acquiesce, and get on with the real business of making

money and enjoying oneself? There can be no doubt that this was the prevailing temper of the common people in town and country alike. They were not irreligious any more than the people of Jerusalem in Isaiah's day; but they wanted an easy religion about which there was no need to trouble themselves when once the prescribed ritual had been performed; and it is not untrue, or unfair, to say that the Bishops generally of Baxter's day like the Priests generally of Isaiah's day were on the side of the people—nay, were the prime authors of their delusion. No railing words are called for, or sweeping judgment. It may be granted that some of the Bishops were good men, and many morally respectable. But I dare to say without fear of contradiction from any competent student that, on the whole, their ambitions, their habits, their religion, their Churchmanship, their temper were steeped in worldliness. In other words, they were controlled by those social forces and interests which rule men when life is regarded apart from the will of God (1 John ii. 15–17). So, there was in them 'no open vision', and under their guidance the people were perishing. No wonder, therefore, if they failed to understand Baxter. He moved on a higher level. Intellectually he was equal to the best of them; in learning he was superior to most of them; but as a moral personality he towered above them all. Hence, his was the 'open vision' which they lacked; and I emphasize this as the second outstanding fact about him. His aim was the glory of God and the will of God. Naturally he set himself, first of all, to see the will of God in relation to his own life. From the first, however, his life was bound up with the Church, whose ministry, sacraments and fellowship were designed to be the visible instrument of God's will in the world. He took so much for granted; and asked only 'is the church effectual for its purpose? If not, what is amiss? and how may it be so guided and kept in the right way, as to reach its proper goal?' We are familiar with his conclusions. We know how he reached them after doing his best to get rid of preconceptions and learn the mind of Christ; we know how simple they are with regard to the Church's ministry, worship, government and doctrine; we know how he lays continual and ever deepening stress on the essentials as distinct from the circumstantials of religion;

we know how. the essentials as he described them are really what Christians everywhere and always (on the whole) have agreed to be such; we know how the worst divisions of Christendom are due, as he insisted, to sectarian preference for unessential points, and would disappear of themselves if the essentials were given the central place in faith and conduct; we know how he strove incessantly for union on the basis of these; and how he looked to this with a yearning heart, as the sure foundation of peace. But so far as concerned the rulers of the English Church—not to speak of some nonconformists who were no less blind—Baxter's vision had no existence. In their eyes his lonely figure had no pathos, nor his pleas for peace any meaning. The peace they schemed, and legislated, and persecuted for was the bastard peace of a uniformity based on assent and consent to a host of non-essentials. Their due reward—or rather the dire penalty bequeathed to the Church—was the loss of its best sons, its best ideals, its best life and the unspeakably dreary record of its failure throughout the eighteenth century. Whether the church has undergone any real change of heart, even yet, is not quite clear. If one judges from certain rather scornful references to Baxter, or from the irrational importance attached to the degree and manner of his ordination, it would be doubtful; and it would be very doubtful indeed, if one judged from the public attitude of some who profess to speak for the party that calls itself Catholic. For they, to all appearance, have hardly advanced a step from the ditch into which Morley, Sheldon and their fellows piloted the Church. But it is safer to judge by the light of the Lambeth Conference and other significant movements of like kind. These *do* imply a change of heart and outlook. Some of the main proposals for unity and peace are exactly in the line of Baxter's. Better still, the spirit inspiring them is Baxter's. My own belief—for what it is worth—inclines me to say that if definite proposals for unity and peace are, of much or any use, Baxter's cannot be improved. The vision behind them is that of a truly catholic visible church; and they point out the lines by which alone the 'vision splendid' can ever be realized.

(3) But it is Baxter's spirit which contains the sure promise

of unity and peace. Nothing is truer of Baxter than to say that he was always trying to cultivate in himself and others the spirit of love. He did not find it an easy task: for the old Adam was strong in him as well as in them. But he took it to be the task most worthy of his watchful effort; and the result, in his own case, was a feeling of love, even for his enemies and those farthest from him in belief like the Papists, which became the spontaneous habit of his soul.

We see the rich growth of this feeling in the tolerance which breathes through the pages of his 'Self-review'.¹ It was the spirit of love which led him to say to controversialists, including himself—'If you would have the waters of verity and piety to be clear, the way is, not to stir in them and trouble them, but to let them settle in peace and flow down into practice'.² He begged his brethren of the Worcestershire Association to bear in mind above all that 'self-denial and the love of God in Christ do constitute the *new man*. The exercise of these must be the daily work of your hearts and lives; and the preaching of these the sum of your doctrine. Where love doth constrain you, and self-denial cleanse your way, you will find alacrity and delight in those works which, to the carnal, seem thorny and grievous and not to be attempted. This will make you to be up and doing when others are loitering, and wishing, and pleasing the flesh, and contenting themselves with plausible sermons, and the repute of being able pious men. If these two graces be but living in your hearts, they will run through your thoughts and words and ways, and give them a spiritual and heavenly tincture. They will appear in your sermons and exemplary lives, and give you a special fertility in good works. They will have so fruitful an influence upon all your flock that none of them shall pass into another world, and take possession of their everlasting state, till you have done your best for their conversion and salvation. And, therefore, that we may daily live in the Love of God, in self-denial, and Christian unity is the sum of the prayers of your unworthy brother Richard Baxter'.³

¹ *R.B.*, Pt. I, pp. 124–38.

² *S.E.R.*, Pt. III, § 10.

³ *Certain Disputations*. . . . Prefatory address, January 17, 1656–7.

There was an unnamed conformist minister who lay ill, and seems to have expressed regret that he had joined with others in promoting the persecution of nonconformists, and of Baxter in particular. This came to Baxter's ears, who then wrote:

‘REVEREND SIR,

When I heard that God had visited you with sickness (though I hear withal of the hopes of your recovery) and withal, that you were solicitous to disclaim the guilt of my (little) sufferings, I was afraid lest you should think that some enmity or uncharitableness had by this means disaffected me towards you; and, living near eternity as I do myself, I am the more deeply sensible that it is my duty to take care that whichsoever of us goeth first out of this world, we may part in love without any rancour and may see that between us there is nothing unforgiven. . . .’¹ Many another witness to the same spirit of love and peace is at hand; but I will end with this fine effusion on ‘the duty of all other Christians towards the Papists in order to the promoting of the common interest of Christianity’.

(1) We must lay deep in our minds and inculcate on our hearers, the common fundamental truth and duty, that love is the second great commandment like the first, that it is the fulfilling of the law, that he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him; that he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen loveth not God whom he never saw; that some love belongs to enemies and much more to brethren; that, as much as in us lieth we must live peaceably with all men, yes, and follow peace with all men; and that these are duties that nothing can dispense with.

(2) We must acknowledge and commend all that is good among them, and must truly understand in what we are agreed.

(3) We must not deny what good use God hath made of Rome's grandeur, unity and concord. Its like, else, Christianity had not kept up such advantages of strength, wealth and concord against the great power of the Mahometan and Heathen enemies.

(4) We must not, by scandals of some persons or fraternities,

¹ Baxter MSS. (Letters), v, f. 113^{ab} (no date or address and unfinished).

be drawn to think the rest are like them, nor to deny but such men as Bernard, Gerson, and abundance of friars and nuns, though zealous for the Roman concord, were godly excellent persons. Even in the dark ages of the Church, what abundance of most learned school doctors had they, in which much piety also appeared (as in Bonaventura, Sales, etc.); and in the Oratoriary and many most learned Jesuits. All this we must candidly confess and honour.

(5) I think we should hurt no Papist in body or goods any further than it is necessary to our own defence, or the defence of the truth and souls of men and the Kingdom's safety; but win them by love.

(6) And (though the unlearned have safer and better books enough to read) I think it will do much to rectify men's judgments that are inclined to extremes, and to mellow and sweeten their hearts into Christian love, if the learned would read the devotional, pious writings of Papists . . . they would find there so much of God as would win their affections to a brotherly kindness, while they find so much of that which is in themselves. Holy breathings after God are savory to those that have the like. I know those that have read or heard such books as these that have said, 'how have we misunderstood the Papists'. If an esteemed minister should preach part of the *Interior Christian*,² or such another book, and not tell his hearers whose it was, I doubt not that many godly people would cry it up for a most excellent sermon, when as, if they before knew that it was a papist's they would run away. I do not, by any of this, encourage any raw unguarded protestants to cast themselves on the temptation of popish company or books; but that you may see that I write not this falsely and without just cause, I will instance one book, called *Bunny's Resolution*. It was written by Parsons, one accounted a most traitorous Jesuit, and Edmund Bunny corrected and published it (and Parsons reprinted it with more Popery, reviling Bunny for being so bold with his book, as to sponge out the popish errors). I have met with several eminent Christians

¹ 1636.

² 'Or the Interior Conformity which Christians ought to have with Jesus Christ'. Trans. from French. Antwerp, 1684.

that magnified the good they had received by that book. When I was 21 years of age,¹ the Bishop's severity against private meeting caused many excellent Christians in Shrewsbury to meet secretly for mutual edification. At one of these, where was, of ministers, Mr Cradock, Mr Richard Simonds, and Mr Fawler (cast out of Bridewell Church since) Mr Simonds said, that there were some godly women in great doubt of the sincerity of their conversion, because they know not the time, means and manner of it; and desired all that were willing to open the case of their own, to satisfy such. I remember but one who could tell just the time, means and manner, but with most it 'began early', and was brought on by slow degrees—but so as some one *time and means* made a more observable change than any other. Among these, three spake their own case, that, after many convictions, and a love to piety, the first lively motions that awakened their souls to a serious resolved care of their salvation, was the reading of *Bunny's Book of Resolution*. These three were Mr Fawler, Mr Michael Old (for zeal known through much of England) and myself. And having since heard of the same success with others (when yet now there be many books that I had rather read) I have reason to think that God notified his will, that we should (instead of rash hatred) profit by each other, and love his Word whoever writeth it.¹

Who will question that the spirit which inspired such sentiments needs but to spread among all the churches and their union will follow as a matter of course; and will be of the truest kind?

¹ *Against a Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction*, Chap. 13.

APPENDIX I

I owed it to the courtesy of the Rev. W. G. D. Fletcher, Vicar of Shelton and Oxon, near Shrewsbury, and editor of the *Shropshire Archæological Transactions*, that I was able to reprint Baxter's pedigree on the father's side as an appendix to vol. I; and now the kindness of the same very competent antiquary has communicated to me the result of his research into the mother's side of the family tree. From this it would appear that Beatrice Adney (*or* Adeney) and so her son, perhaps all unknown to themselves, had some tincture of royal blood in their veins.

Mr Fletcher has been good enough to state the matter in his own words:

'Through the marriage of his maternal grandfather Richard Adney with Fortune Braddock, the eldest daughter of Edmund Braddock, of Adbaston, Baxter was descended from many distinguished personages. Edmund Braddock had married Elizabeth, daughter of John Skrymshire, of Norbury, whose wife was Dorothy, daughter of Sir John Talbot, of Grafton—a great-grandson of the second Earl of Shrewsbury, K.G., who was slain at the battle of Northampton in 1460. From these Talbot ancestors Baxter could number among his lineal ancestors Kings Henry III and Edward I, Edmund "Crouchback", the de Bohns (Earls of Hereford and Essex), the Butlers (Earls of Ormonde), the Fitzgeralds (Earls of Kildare), the Lords Welles, Lord Mowbray of Axholme, Lord Segrave, and one canonized saint, St Ferdinand of Castile. He was also a great-nephew of Overton, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, who had married

Mary Braddock, Fortune's youngest sister.'

Mr Fletcher adds—'The late Dr Adeney's alleged descent from the Adneys of Rowton is not clear, I wish it were. I should like to trace it if I possibly could, but at present it rests on assumption. There are several missing links, and it is not easy to fill gaps where wills are missing'.

APPENDIX 2

Sir Matthew Hale, who died in 1676, bequeathed a legacy of 40s. to Baxter 'with which' (he says) 'I purchased the largest Cambridge Bible and put his picture before it, as a monument to my house. But, waiting for my own death, I gave it to Sir William Ellis, who laid out about ten pounds to put it into a more curious cover, and keep it for a monument in his house' (*R.B.*, II, 181).

In his appendix to Bishop Burnet's *Life of Hale*, he closed up all he could say about his friend with a recital of what he wrote 'by his picture in front of the great Bible'—viz.:

'Sir Matthew Hale, that unwearied student; that prudent man; that solid philosopher; that famous lawyer; that pillar and basis of Justice, who would not have done an unjust act for any worldly price or motive; the ornament of his Majesty's government and honour of England; the highest faculty of the soul of Westminster Hall and pattern to all the reverend and honoured judges; that godly serious practical Christian, the lover of goodness and all good men; a lamenter of the clergy's selfishness and unfaithfulness and discord, and of the sad division following thereupon; an earnest desirer of their reformation, concord, and the Church's peace, and of a reformed Act of uniformity, as the best and necessary means thereto—that great container of the riches, pomp, and vanity of the world; that pattern of honest plainness and humility, who, while he fled from the honours that pursued him, was yet Lord Chief Justice of the King's bench, after his being long Chief baron of the Exchequer; living and dying, entering on, using and voluntarily surrendering, his place of judicature, with the most universal love and honour, and praise, that ever did English subject in this age, or any that just history doth acquaint us with, etc. . . . this man, so wise, so good, so great, bequeathing me, in his testament, the legacy of forty shillings, merely as a testimony of his respect and love, I thought this book, the Testament of Christ, the meetest purchase by that price, to remain in memorial of the faithful love which he bare and long expressed, to his inferior and unworthy but honouring friend, who thought to have been with Christ

before him, and waiteth for the day of his perfect conjunction with the spirits of the just made perfect. Richard Baxter.' What became of this Bible? An unexpected and gratifying answer to that question is forthcoming. Some time ago an old fellow-student of mine, now Canon Thomas, Rector of Northborne, Kent, was the guest of the Archdeacon J. V. Macmillan, one of the present Canons of Canterbury; and learnt from him that the Bible is in his possession. Rightly thinking that this fact would interest me he acquainted the Archdeacon with my work on Baxter; and Mr Macmillan most kindly wrote to me as follows:

'The Bible remained in the Ellis family till some 30 or 40 years ago, when a certain Miss Ellis, living at Woking, asked my father-in-law, Sir Frederick Denison Maurice, to come and see her; and gave him the Bible, because she said that her father had always wished that, when the family came to an end, the book should pass into the hands of the family of Frederick Denison Maurice, as a man whom Baxter would have revered beyond other men. The rest of the story also has a curious interest. I married in 1906 the daughter of Sir Frederick Maurice, who gave us the book as a wedding present. I happened to be at the time Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury and was living in the Lollard's Tower at Lambeth Palace, so Richard Baxter's Bible came, after more than 200 years, into Lambeth Palace. When I went as a Chaplain to serve with the Army during the war my home was temporarily broken up and I left this book in the custody of the Librarian of Lambeth Palace, where, as a matter of fact, it still is on view in one of the cases. I am always meaning to get it back; and when I do get it back, as I am now one of the Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, Baxter's Bible will live under the shadow of the Cathedral.' Than which no fitter home for it can be imagined!

APPENDIX 3

In Baxter MSS. (Letters), V, 230^a, 231^b there is Baxter's autograph form of a Petition, which he hoped 'the best of the conforming ministers' might be willing to present, in the right quarter, on behalf of the Nonconformists, together with a private letter which he wrote and sent to each of them. He could get none to offer such a petition (*R.B.*, III, 87), and when he did but mention the offering of one by himself and his fellows, he was laughed at. The date appears to have been about April 22, 1671, when Parliament was prorogued to April 16, 1672. The suggested Petition:

(1) To

'While we have ourselves conformed to the subscriptions, declarations, liturgy and ceremonies required of us by the Laws, we have long been sensible of the Church's loss of many of our Protestant brethren who conform not. And we presume that many of the people think that we consent to their seclusion that we may engross the work and honour, and maintenance to ourselves; and that this prejudice is a hindrance to the success of our own ministry. And we cannot but perceive that the great numbers of grossly ignorant and ungodly persons, with the great numbers and industry of papists and other seducers, do loudly call for the united endeavours of all orthodox faithful ministers in the land; and that our divisions are our weakness and our adversary's strength; and that the exclusion of so many Protestants occasioneth those private preachings and assemblies which give hopes to the papists of their enjoying as much liberty as they.

'We, therefore, humbly profess the grief of our hearts for this unhappy breach, and our earnest desire for the healing of it; and that, though we conform to the aforesaid things as lawful yet, we take not our brethren's conformity to them to be so necessary as their ministry. And, therefore, humbly make it our petition that all worthy men who will subscribe to the doctrine of the Church of England in the thirty-nine Articles according to the 13 Elizabeth, and will take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and promise to live peaceably,

may be capable of places in the public ministry, and of institution, induction, and actual ministration if already ordained, and of ordination if unordained, without any oaths, declarations, subscriptions, or reordination, saving a mere collation of legal authority. And that those who take the aforesaid oaths and subscriptions but cannot—use the liturgy or ceremonies, nor be the procurers of others to use them, may yet have leave to preach that Gospel which we all agree in, in such Churches where the said liturgy and ceremonies are used by others, under such laws of peace, as shall penally restrain them from preaching or practising against the said liturgy or ceremonies or against the episcopal government of the Church, and from all unpeaceable doctrine and behaviour—which we hope would do much to the healing of our division; or, at least, that some learned and peacemaking comformable divines may be appointed to attempt an agreement with the moderate nonconformists on such terms as shall be safe and honourable to the Church, and to tender the results to your grave consideration.’

Such was the suggested form of petition which Baxter enclosed in his letter to certain ‘friendly conformists for clemency to nonconformists’, as follows:

‘It is thought by some wise men who would fain prevent our feared ruin, that it will be a very useful and seasonable work for those honest conformists who truly prefer the Church’s safety and the souls of men before their ease or worldly interests, to show themselves, presently, by such a petition as this, either to the Parliament or to the Lords spiritual alone, as they judge best, so it be openly done. The fruits expected are (1) That the Parliament will see that many learned peaceable conformists are for that moderation which may heal us, which may do much to incline themselves to the same.

(2) Or, at least, it will quiet your consciences that you did your part, and were not mere self-saving timorous spectators in such a perilous time as this.

(3) And it will greatly reconcile the people to your ministry, which will tend to the healing of our alienations and separations, and to the edifying of the hearers’ souls.

And there being no men whom the nonconformists more honour as understanding, conscionable, reasonable men, than yourselves and Dr Stillingfleet, Dr Outram, Mr Gifford, Dr Ford, etc., etc., it is desired that you would communicate this to them and such others, and attempt a consent, at least of some, in so good a work, which is motioned to you for those necessary ends, which we must all live for, by

‘One that truly loves and honours you.’

APPENDIX 4

It might almost seem as if Baxter (*R.B.*, III, 87) thought the King was honestly against the persecution of the nonconformists; and published his Declaration for their sakes—deliberately at the risk of his own interest. But the following from one of his last published books—*Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* . . . (1691) discloses his real opinion.

‘I was past doubt in 1660 that the King was as he died (a papist) or had engaged himself to promote it’ (popery) ‘here, first by giving them liberty of their religion, and afterwards the power of the land, majistracy, militia, and the Church. . . .’ What Religion King Charles II was of at his death his brother has told us;¹ and what he was before his return I marvel not that Huddleston tells us so obscurely; but I would rather believe his own words and deeds than the reports and conjectures of others. . . . Till the King could safely declare himself for popery, his way was to do all as a protestant that might advantage them (the papists)—

‘The King had the choice of the Bishops and Deans and other Church preferments; and of the Masters of Colleges, and of the Judges; and other civil powers and honours. Accordingly, he made those Bishops, Deans, Masters of Colleges, etc., who were known to be the most obedient to his will, and the greatest enemies to those called Puritans. . . .’

From first to last the King pursued the same object.

- (a) His Declaration for Toleration at Breda had an eye to the papists.
- (b) When he issued his Declaration about ecclesiastical affairs (October 1660), it was to try whether we would consent to a common toleration.
- (c) The Lord Bridgman’s overtures (1668) for com prehension and toleration aimed at the same things; and so did
- (d) the King’s arbitrary ‘Declaration for licensing a Toleration’ in 1672. ‘The cruelty of the persecution of the

¹ In two papers said to have been written by Charles II and attested by James II as found by him in his late brother’s strong box. Copies of them are in Baxter MSS. (*Treatises*), iv, ff. 204–7. See Macaulay, *History of England*, Vol. ii, 349 (Popular Ed.).

nonconformists' was supposed to have so moved the royal heart that he could not forbear to intervene; but his chief concern was to relieve the papists, and so on (pp. 322–6).

Evidently Baxter had no faith in Charles II, though as King, the power ordained of God, he gave him all due observance.

APPENDIX 5

Baxter appears to pass over in his autobiography the death of his wife; and one might have supposed his reticence to be the natural effect of unspeakable grief. Yet it was not quite like him. He was an 'Extravert' and could seldom keep any deep feeling to himself. Hence it is not surprising to discover by a collation of the printed text with his MS.—which in this place happens to be extant—that he deals with his bereavement in a section which, for some reason, was omitted by Sylvester. It stood between § 72 and § 73, *R.B.*, III, p. 190; and is as follows:

'In 1681, God called my sin to remembrance by his heavy hand on my dear wife, a woman of extraordinary acuteness of wit, solidity and judgment, incredible prudence and sagacity and sincere devotedness to God, and unusual strict obedience to Him, and who had heaped on me so many and great obligations to love and tenderness as made my wound more deep and painful. She had a hot sharp blood and hot brain, and a woman persuading her to too long a use of ginger for the colic, had cast her into a distraction three years before, and I had begged and obtained her speedy recovery of God, and promised a better usage and improvement of so great a mercy, but broke my vow and made no better use of it than before. And on June 3, with the overmuch use of the tincture of amber by another woman's counsel, and after long (vain) fears of a cancer . . . she fell again into the same case (some dissatisfaction in her kindred furthering it, being of an over-tender and sensible temper); and suddenly weakened by blood-letting, died June 14, and was buried in her mother's grave in Christ Church, June 17. In depth of grief I truly wrote her life (which Mr Clark hath since contracted) and published it with her mother's old funeral sermon which (forseeing her death) she had requested me to reprint December 30 before. In the same passion I published some *Poetical Fragments* written partly in gratitude for myself formerly, and partly in grief for her in former sickness and affliction, and for some others, and though

(being now too dull for poetry) they take not with those that expect more art—they profit two sorts, women and vulgar Christians and persons in passion and affliction; and some in devotional exercise of affection. . . .’

APPENDIX 6

There is no present occasion, nor am I competent, to correct any mistakes of fact contained in the following. It is quoted merely as a remarkable illustration of Baxter's practical Catholicity—the extraordinary range of it compared with the narrowness of the Dodwellians; and the fine charity which inclines him always to seek the true and good where it was usually ignored, or presumed not to exist:

'An account of my dissent from Dr Sherlock . . .' pp. 189–93

What sects of Christians now in the world are of the Catholic Church?

This is necessary to be understood when the canoneers talk of a supreme government over the whole Church, and that those only are of the Church that hold communion with it, and that this communion lieth in obedience to this supreme government that it may be known of what extent they make their catholic Church, and how many they cut off by confining it to a sect.

I. One sect of Christians are the papists, who are so many that their deceiving priests would make the ignorant believe that before *Luther's* time they were all the Christian world.

II. The Reformed Churches called protestants are a party indeed, but deserve not the name of a sect: for their religion is nothing but simple *Christianity*, protesting against the papal corruptions; though their minuter differences have made some called *Lutherans*, some *Calvinists*, some *Episcopal*, some *Presbyterians*, some *Independents*, and some *Politicians* or *Erastians*, to say nothing of Anabaptists (who as they differ only in the point of infant Baptism would have been tolerated by such as Tertullian and Gregory Nazianzene, who persuaded the delay of Baptism; and by the primitive Churches, which for many hundred years, left all to their liberty, when to be baptized; and stayed till they sought it).

III. The Greek Christians are under the Patriarch of *Constantinople* (having no capacity to call General Councils). How many kingdoms (or rather captivated nations now) are under

him, you may see in . . . Brierwood¹ p. 125 and others . . . who tell us what their religion is.

The Moscovites I join with the Grecians as being in the main of the same religion and communion, though the Emperor hath taken the Patriarch's power to himself and his.

IV. The Christians called Nestorians, as travellers have recorded, are exceeding numerous in a great part of the East—saith Brierwood—besides the countries of Babylon, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Parthia and Media, wherein many are found. That sect is spread northerly to Cataya and southerly to India, and Paulus Venetus (1368–1428) tells you of them in many provinces of Tartary. . . . Their chief governing Patriarch is at Muzal (Mosul) in Mesopotamia. As to their religion, their accusers say it is the same with Nestorius's, whom *David Derodon* (c. 1600–66) . . . hath largely defended as orthodox. But travellers that have lived among them tell us that they differ from us in no point of faith but only honour the name of Nestorius (d. *cir.* 451) and vilify the name of Cyril (d. 444) and the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), etc.

And so 'they' are a Sect, but nothing like a heresy.

V. The Eutychians called Jacobites, are a very numerous sect in Syria, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, Babylon, Palestine. Their Patriarch resideth in Caramit (Amida) the Metropolis of Mesopotamia, and calleth himself Patriarch of Antioch (still named *Ignatius*); and the Patriarch of Jerusalem (saith Brierwood, after many others) is a Jacobite, and is under him. The most impartial Papists that have conversed with them, attest that they differ little from the orthodox, but in words about the Eutychianism, of which they are accused.

VI. The Egyptian Christians called *Copti* or *Cophti*, though Jacobites, are a distinct sect; as being under the Patriarch of *Alexandria* (residing in Caire (Cairo) usually). And all the *Jacobites* chiefly differ from the Europeans by borrowing the names of Dioscorus (d. 454) Severus (d. 538) and *Jacob Zanzalus* (d. 518), and disclaiming the Council of C(h)alcecon (451).

¹ Edward Breirwood, (1565, 1613), antiquary and mathematician. Baxter's reference is to *Enquiries touching the Diversities of Languages and Religion through the chief parts of the world*—first printed in 1614 by his nephew. The name is usually spelt Brerewood. See D.N.B.

VII. The great Empire of the Abassimes (yet, after the great diminution, saith Brierwood, as big as France, Spain, Italy and Germany) though in the main they are Jacobites, have divers differences, and have a chief Bishop of their own chosen by the monks of St Anthonies (Anthony's) order at Jerusalem, and confirmed by the Patriarch of Alexandria.

VIII. The Melchites are of the same religion with the Greeks but of a different sect, under their Patriarch of Antioch living at Damascus. For there being four pretended Patriarchs of Antioch, they head three different sects; I say three, for the fourth is a mere creature of the Pope's, that personates that Patriarch. The writers mistake, that think they took this name to themselves. They were nicknamed Melchites in scorn by the clergy-council zealots as men that would be of any religion that the King was of, because they obeyed the Emperor against the Councils. Boterus (Botero)¹ saith, They are the greatest sect of Christians in the East.

IX. The Georgians are of the Greek religion but (saith Brierwood) in no sort subject (nor ever were) to the Patriarch of Constantinople; but all their Bishops (being 18) profess obedience to their own Metropolitan, without any higher dependence or relation: who yet keepeth his residence far off in the hill of Sinai. They are the Iberians between the Euxine and Caspian seas.

And their neighbours, the Circassians and Mengrelians, are of the Greek communion, yet differ from others (as not baptizing children till they be eight years old, etc., who by our prelates would be called intolerable Anabapists, *vide* Brierwood c. 17. p. 135)

X. The Armenians dwell in the greater Armenia (Turcomania) and the lesser Armenia and Cilicia (Carmania). And having a special patent from Mahomet (as Postell us saith) are for their merchandise spread through the Turkish Empire. The interior Armenia was once under Constantinople; but they have, above a thousand years, been withdrawn from that Patriarch and the communion of the Greeks; and—as Brierwood saith out of Photius (815–97) and Baronius (1538–1607)—they detest them more than any sect of Christians. And it is

¹ Probably Giovanni Botero (1540–1617). See B.M. Catalogue *sub voce*.

not a pageant, or subornation of the papists that will prove them subject to the Pope of Rome. They obey only two Primates, called Catholics, of their own. They are superstitiously religious, especially in abstinence and fastings.

XI. The Maronites are counted the least sect of Christians, in Mount Libanus (Lebanon), sometimes seeming to submit to the Pope and sometimes rejecting him; but being once Monothelites, which they have now forsaken.

XII. The Indian Christians (or of St Thomas) were long Nestorians; and sometimes they submit to Rome and sometimes not, and differ from them in many things, of which see Brierwood, pages 146, 147, etc.

Now, Reader, the question in hand is, which of all these twelve parties are parts of the catholic Church? The church that I believe containeth ALL these, except the following doubt of the papists. All of them profess to believe all the essentials of Christianity, and most of the integrals. Of the eleven none (that I can learn) hold any heresy directly contrary to any essential point. Those which are charged on their ancestors, I find not only improved as to the present Christians, but disproved. . . . Brochardus¹ that dwelt among them at Jerusalem professeth that these eastern christians are good, harmless men, neither owning nor knowing the heresies charged on them for their names; but men of better lives, and stricter, than even the religious of the Church of Rome and shaming the Europeans. . . . The publisher (a Maronite papist) of the Arabian *Geographia Nubiensis* . . . confesseth that all the Christians in the east do believe in Christ the Lord, and the Son of God incarnate for man's salvation, and with the greatest honour do all reverence his holy Gospel; but tells us of such things as others had charged on them (as that the holy Ghost proceeds only from the Father, that there is no Purgatory, etc. But the great thing is, they deny the primacy of the Pope, Christ's vicar on earth, and hate him and his subjects).

The main doubt is of the Papists, who are the chief condemners of the rest, of whom I have said:

¹ Supposed author of a tract entitled *Directorium ad faciendum pauagium transmarinum* (1330). See Beasley's 'Dawn of Modern Geography', vol. iii, p. 212, note 1.

- (1) As they are a church informed by the Papal monarchy, they are no Church of Christ.
- (2) As they are Christians, they hold all things essential to Christianity.
- (3) As they are corrupt Christians, they hold many errors corrupting Christianity.
- (4) Those in whose minds, hearts and lives the Truth is predominant against their errors—as to their love, choice, and practice—are saved; and the contrary perish.

And so I have fully told what I take for the Catholic Church.

APPENDIX 7

There is no proof of the report which ascribes the proposal that Baxter should be prosecuted for High Treason, to Dr Sherlock; but there is proof of a former acquaintance with Baxter of such a character as, with a vindictive man, might tempt him to make the proposal. Was Sherlock a vindictive man? is, of course, another question. Perhaps some light may fall upon it from the following story.

In 1681 Baxter received a book written by some one who called himself 'Dr Stillingfleet's Defender', i.e. defender of. the doctor's arguments for the 'unreasonableness' of Separation'. In this book he took up the role of Mr Dodwell's defender as well, and told how well the latter had put Mr Baxter to shame. 'Uncontrolled fame' pointed out Sherlock as the writer; and this reminded Baxter of certain incidents.

'It is not long ago that he came to me at *Acton* (where I lived when silenced and ejected), as seemed to me in the garb of a young man not fixed in his resolution to conform (and therefore I thought not yet ordained); and he told me *that he came to hear what I had to say against conformity?* I asked him *why he ask! me the question? and whether he were in any doubt? and if so, of what?* He would give me no answer to any of this. *But he would know what I had to say against conformity?* I told him I did not use to tell men what I had to say, I knew not why; nor without cogent reason seek to make others of my mind. I thought him a resolved designing aggressor, and imagined that his honest father had made him consent to come first to hear what I could say, and that he used this way of his own to secure his ends. But foreseeing that he was like to go home and say *Mr Baxter had nothing to say against conformity*, I told him why I could not own the *english* state of Prelacy, as unavoidably casting out the discipline of Christ. He told me that he was of Dr Stillingfleet's judgment in his *Irenicon* that saith, *no form of Church government is of divine institution*. I thought it strange that he that thought so, could yet subscribe to what is said of the *three orders from the Apostles time, in the book of Ordination*. But now how far is this man changed? I allow him to be wiser since he signs himself D.D., and wish I could have

learnt in 43 years as much as he thinks he hath done since then'.¹

This visit cannot have been later than June 1669, when Baxter passed from Acton to prison; and considering that Sherlock became Rector of St George's, Botolph Lane, in August 1669, it must have been some time sooner.

'After this', continues Baxter, 'he published a famous book against the supposed dangerous doctrines of some, about *Imputation of Christ's Righteousness*, and against men's pretending to acquaintance with Christ, and many such things. A friend of his desired me to write my judgment of it. I told him I would rather tell it to the author, secretly, alone. He vouchsafed to come to me. I presumed to tell him how he had made odious some unapt words of a few others, with words so much worse of his own, as seemed to import no less than a denial of our belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but, hoping he meant better than he spoke, advised him by explication or retraction to prevent the consequences; and the next day wrote to him this letter following—dated December 24, 1673, and designed to 'rub in' what he had said. Sherlock's brief answer, after delay occasioned by Christmas engagements, was formally thankful, but cold.²

His next appearance in connection with Baxter was as the masked defender of Stillingfleet, who had shaken off his *Irenicon*, and persuaded Sherlock to do likewise. But Stillingfleet never went to Dodwell's extreme, and so fell behind his follower, who seems to have made himself Dodwell's imperfect' echo. Baxter answers him in the same treatise³ with Dodwell, Thorndike, Bishop Gunning's Chaplain, and others—or rather he stays his hand, and declines to answer him. 'For his book is like a tree with the branches down-ward, and the root upward. But to confess my weakness, if it be such, I had not patience enough to endure to open such a rhapsody of contradictions and mistakes or gross fallacies or untruths; nor can I think that many readers have patience and leisure any more than I, to peruse one hundred more sheets (or pages either) which would

¹ *An account of my dissent from Dr Sherlock*, p. 161.

² *An Account*, pp. 162–74.

be little enough to show all the faults and fallacies of his book, as fully as, word for word, it should be answered'.¹

Sherlock was a proud man to say the least; and was not likely to have taken such scornful words meekly, or to have forgotten them when, four years later, Baxter came to his ordeal.

¹ *An account*, p. 228.

APPENDIX 8

‘The second edition corrected’ of the *Paraphrase* was printed in 1695, and at the end there is the following note (perhaps by Sylvester):

Mr Baxter’s own account of the cause of his imprisonment left under his own hand to be printed with his *Paraphrase*.

READER,

It’s like you have heard how I was, for this Book, by the instigation of Sir Roger L’Estrange and some of the clergy, imprisoned near two years by Sir George Geffery’s, Sir Francis Withins and the rest of the Judges of the King-Bench, after their Preparatory restraints and attendants under the most reproachful words, as if I had been the most odious person living, and not suffered at all to speak for myself; and had not the King taken off my fine, I had continued in prison till death. Because many desire to know what all this was for, I have here written the eight accusations which (after the great clergy-search of my book) were brought in as seditious. I have altered never a word accused; that you may know the worst. What I said of the murderers of Christ and the hypocrite Pharisees and their sins, the Judge said I meant of the Church of England, though I have written for it and still communicate with it.

The accused words are,

The Paraphrase

1. on Mat. 5. 19.
2. „ Mark 3. 6.
3. „ „ 9 39
4. „ „ 11. 31.
5. „ „ 12. 38, 39, 40.
6. „ Luke 10. 2.
7. „ John 11. 57.
8. „ Acts 15. 2.

Note. These were all—though a Reverend Doctor, that knoweth his own name, put into their hands some accusations out of Rom. 13, etc., as against the King, to touch my life. But their discretion forbid them to use, or name them.

RICHD. BAXTER.

APPENDIX 9

*Baxter's comments.*¹
A^o Sept. 1686.

A NOATE OF SEVERALL SUMS OF MONEY PAID OUT AND EXPENDED IN THE PROSECUTING
MR RICHARD BAXTERS DISCHARGE FROM THE KINGS BENCH IN 1686.

	£	s.	d.
1. I sent not for you, & you might goe 1. In ^r mis, Layd out & expended for wateridge, meate and over the bridge or crosse the water for three (pence) & might goe one hour with yo ^r ordinary food			
2. W ^t were the expences more neces- 2. Itt ^r Layd out for wateridge and other nescicarye expences the sary than yo ^r comon food & 3 pence water?	00	17	2
3. You used no counsel by my consent 3. Itt ^r For Advice of counsell and drawing the Petition into a or knowledge & I told you I would draw up my petition myselfe	00	05	9
4. You promised me to shew no draught, 4. Itt ^r For faire writing severall other Petitions drawn by him- but that written by myselfe, & said you did so	01	06	8
5. Here is no mention of anything done 5. Itt ^r Layd out and expendid for coach hyres and wateridge, for me, for this	00	08	6
6. You might have gone to Windsor, if 6. Itt ^r For horse hyre to Windsor the first time you had busynes there by coach for 3 ^d , but I sent you not	24	10	0
7. Who sent you thither and who 7. Itt ^r Layd out and expended there, in Lodging, mansmeate, found you meat at home? Did I hire you by the yeare?	00	18	0
8. The other journey was not by my will 8. Itt ^r Layd out and expended in a second journey for horse- or knowledge nor do you say what you did for me by all these journeys	01	17	6
	02	09	7

9. If you journeyed to the Duke of Beaufort & all those other Noble- men, it was in despright of me who chargd to go to none but the Lord Powis, nor to do anything with any but by my foregoing consent				
10. I sent you to no Nobleman but the L ^d Powis, & required you to give no money before I consented to it	02	06	11	
11. W ^t Petitions & Papers were these? w ^{ch} I never heard of or consented to?	01	02	06	
12. Did penny post Letters & messengers to my L ^d Powis, cost you 13s. 7d.? He can tell	00	17	08	
13. I never saw you for many weeks before my busynes was done by others as their accounts shew, nor of many weeks after I was free: nor till Dec. 11 th	00	13	07	
14. Your false pretences, & shameless Letters of Challenge, for 100 ^l reward I have answered more at large. In owe you 38 ^l for nothing but bringing my petition to my L ^d Powis, how many hundred pounds might lowe to them who did my busynes under my Lord as my Solicitors?	00	12	06	
	£38	06	04	

Sume total of expenses & disbursements is

14. As for my reward I hope I may reasonably expect, what you
were willing to have given to others, w^{ch} was £100, espec-
ially since yourselfe dispaired of effecting the thing; besides,
it had been blown upon before which, with your admitting
of noe method but your owne, rendred it y^e more difficult.
I therefore leave it to your consideration, and since I was
soe fayre (as) to undertake it (when noe one would) without
Insisting on extraordinary Terms, as anyone else would
have done, I hope you will not forfeite the esteme, both I
and others had of you, that you would not be streight in
gratefying my Indefatigable paynes in prosecuting your
discharge with so much expedition, having obtained it in
Lesse than three months tyme.

i Baxter MSS. (Treatises), iv, ff. 411^b-412^a.

APPENDIX 10
SYLVESTER'S DESCRIPTION OF BAXTER

(From Funeral Sermon, pp. 14-15—at end of *R.B.*)

He was most intent upon the weightiest and most useful parts of learning; yet a great lover of all kinds and degrees thereof. He could, in preaching, writing, conference, accommodate himself to all capacities; and answer his obligations to the wise and unwise. He had a moving πάθος and useful acrimony in his words; neither did his expressions want their emphatical accent, as the matter did require. And when he spake of weighty soul-concerns, you might find his very spirit drench'd therein. He was pleasingly conversible, save in his studying-hours, wherein he could not bear with trivial disturbances. He was sparingly facetious; but never light or frothy. His heart was warm, plain fixed; his life was blameless, exemplary, uniform. He was unmovable, where apprehensive of his duty; yet affable and condescending where likelihood of doing good was in his prospect. His personal abstinence, severities and labours, were exceeding great: He kept his body at an under; and always fear'd pampering his flesh too much. He diligently, and with great pleasure minded his Master's Work within doors and without, whilst he was able. His charity was very great; greatly proportionable to his abilities: his purse was ever open to the poor; and, where the case requir'd it, he never thought great sums too much: he rather gave *cumulatim* than *denariatim*; and suited what he gave to the necessities and characters of those he gave to: Nor was his charity confin'd to parties or opinions. He was a man of manifold and pressing exercises; and of answerable patience and submission under the hand of God; and though he was seldom without pain, or sickness (but mostly pain); yet never did he murmur; but us'd to say, it is but flesh. And when I have asked him how he did? His usual answer was, either *almost well*: or, *better than I deserve to be; but not so well as I hope to be*. Once, I remember, when I was with him in the country at his request: he, being in the extremity of pain (and that so exquisite as to appear in the sudden and great changes of his countenance) rais'd himself

from his couch whereon he had laid himself; and thus exprest himself, whatever the world thinks of me, I can truly say, that I have served God with uprightness of heart, and that I never spake anything that I took not to be truth, and at that time to be my duty. He was no ways clandestinely rigid, or censorious as to others. When he told men to their faces of their faults, he would hear what they had to say, and then reprove them with as great pungency as he thought their fault deserved; but yet behind men's backs he was always ready to believe the best; and, whatever he could think on that might extenuate their crime, if there was any likelihood of truth therein, he would be sure to mention that: so great a friend was he to every man's useful reputation. As to himself, even to the last, I never could perceive his peace and heavenly hopes assaulted or disturbed. I have often heard him greatly lament himself, in that he felt no greater liveliness in what appear'd so great and clear to him, and so very much desir'd by him. As to the influence thereof upon his spirit, in order to the sensible refreshments of it, he clearly saw what ground he had to rejoice in God; he doubted not of his right to heaven; he told me, he knew it should be well with him when he was gone. He wondered to hear others speak of their so sensible passionately strong desires to die, and of their transports of spirit when sensible of their approaching death: when as he himself thought he knew as much as they; and had as rational satisfaction as they could have, that his soul was safe: and yet could never feel their sensible consolations. And when I asked him, whether much of this was not to be resolved into bodily constitution? he did indeed tell me, that he thought it might be so. But I have often thought, that God wisely made him herein (as in many other things) comformable to his great Master Jesus Christ; whose joys we find commonly the fruit of deep and close thought. Christ argu'd himself into his own comforts. Which thing is evident from scriptures not a few; take for a taste, Psalm xvi. 8–11, Hebrews xii. 2. The testimony of his conscience was ever his rejoicing: like that in 2 Corinthians i. 12. He ever kept that tender; and gave such diligence to run his race, fulfil his ministry, and so to make his calling and election firm and clear, as that I cannot but conclude an entrance was ministred abundantly to his departed

spirit into the everlasting Kingdom of (Elijah's and) his God and Saviour; and that it will be more abundant to his raised person when the Lord appears. The Heavenly state cost him severe and daily thoughts, and solemn contemplations; for he set some time apart every day for that weighty work. He knew that neither Grace nor Duty could be duly actuated without pertinent and serious meditation. What can be done without thought? And as he was a scribe instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven, so he both could and did draw forth out of his treasures things new and old, to his own satisfaction and advantage, as well as to the benefit of others. Self-unconcernedness (be it in study, preaching, prayer or conference) dispirits and dilates expressions and performances, as to others or our own selves. To inquire speculatively after God; to speak to God or for him without serious thinking how to do it well; how little does it signify to ministers? how little he esteem'd the world; or flesh or men (save as they are of, and under, and for God) is every way too evident to need insisting on. He neither valued nor fear'd any man so much as to be influenced into sinful distances from, or compliances with them, in wrong to God, and to soul-concerns. But I must not be too copious here, lest it be thought that my relations, or affections to him have deceiv'd or brib'd my judgment.

APPENDIX II

Letter to M. Sylvester, Wedn. Feb. 3rd 1691/2
from John (Archbishop) Tillotson.

Baxter MSS. (Letters), ii, 76^{ab} 77^b
(M.R. XVIII, 203-5).

DEAR SIR,

I return you my thanks for yours, and am glad to hear you intend to write our Rev and beloved Mr Baxter's life. You do it not only or chiefly to satisfy some people's curiosity, nor to honour him who will live in his works but to give glory to God, and benefit those that shall read it. And, therefore, Sir, I would not have you make too much haste in it (in which many will be pressing you) but take time enough to do it well; and not (as too many others in the like cases have done) to murder him while you would make known his life. I need not desire you to set before you the lives that have been written of late more accurately, as that of Mr John Benen, Dr Hammond, Mr Elliott, and others amongst us; Scultetus *Curriculum Vitæ Suæ*, etc., etc., abroad; and of Mr De Renty, and Philip Neri, etc., by the Romanists, which greatly instruct and move while they are read; and I doubt not but you will digest things under several heads, as concerning his piety, temperance, charity, preaching, writings, reproaches, sufferings (insisting especially on that before my Lord Jeffreys), his patience, etc., and of his life in the several places where he resided. His writings, his conversation with you, and many others in London, will furnish you abundantly, and I cannot pretend to add anything material yet I will scribble something while I take the pleasure to recollect some few things in my acquaintance with him, which hath been near forty years. I remember I heard him relate that when he was at Ludlow in his youth, having some thoughts of belonging to that court, there were two young men of his acquaintance that were deeply convinced, of sin, earnest in prayer and profession of religion, that fell away after notoriously. The particulars, which were very affecting, I have forgot, but that wrought much upon him, and the sense of it abode on him when he

related it to me, many years after. One of the chief things for which I first began and always continued to love him, was his profession of love unfeigned to all that love Christ, and that if he lived in a place where it was wholly at his liberty, he would worship God sometimes with the episcopal, sometimes with the congregational, sometimes with the anabaptists, if they would permit him, to show his union with them, but usually in his own way he thought the best. Riding with him one day, he told me the fable of an old man and a young boy, that rode to the market on a poor little ass. As they went, the people cried to this old man and boy, 'are you not ashamed both to ride on the poor ass and kill him?' Then the boy alighted. The next that met them said 'Thou old fool, art thou not ashamed to ride and let the little boy go on foot?' Then the old man alighted and set the boy on his back. The next that met them said, 'you young jackanapes, are you not ashamed to ride and let the poor old man go on foot?' Then the boy alighted, and went on foot with the old man and led the ass empty. The next that met them said, 'Thou old fool, dost thou and the child both go on foot and have an ass unloaden with you?' Saying he could never do anything to purpose till he got above the censures of people, it being impossible to please all. He told me another time that one, discoursing with him, asserted that besides the understanding and will, there must be a third principle of action, because we oft cannot perform inward acts, though we heartily will to do them; which he said he closed with, and was useful to him in his threefold principle, which from the Trinity he insists upon downward very much.

At Kidderminster he practised the physician amongst the country people, and gave them the physic also freely; some commending him much for that, some others said, though he will take no money, his housekeeper will take as many pigs and hens, etc., as you will; so, finding that ill requital, he sent for Dr Jackson amongst them, and let them pay for their physic and their doctor too. They kept many private thanksgivings, as well as fast days; (it were well if we did so) and then had a good dinner, and only the cold meat that was left, at supper. One of the good men (whose name I remember not) said, they ought to have good hot meat at supper as well as at dinner, for else

it was but a fast—and all that he and others could say could not move him from the conceit. I heard him say he would not be willing to have an account to give to God for above a hundred pounds a year, for his maintenance in the ministry. I have admired his discourse above his writings: for putting him upon any point that was more difficult and intricate, I have observed, he would take his rise a good way off, and by several steps fairly linked together, with much clearness go on to what he asserted. You will mention his writings in the order he wrote them, with the occasion and some plain though brief account of them; and especially I would have you clearly and briefly lay down his judgment concerning justification (which few do clearly and fully understand), which of late some in the city have so opposed, and show he clearly magnifies Christ and faith and grace, and doth not really differ from honest, true Protestants; and that his hypothesis may differ from many others (as many of the astronomers do), but that he asserts the same realities with them. I have oft pressed him to let his books lie by him some time, and to review them, again and again; but could never prevail with him who said, they must come forth so or not at all. And, Sir, as God is pleased in the Holy Scriptures to mention the failings of his greatest saints, so you will take a fit occasion to do it handsomely; and that amongst his great excellencies he was not to be looked on as infallible, nor without some failings; one of the chief of which was, his high and peremptory censuring those he dissented from, the famousest writers, synods, etc., with too much magisterialness, and all other Protestant divines in managing the controversies with the Papists, especially concerning the Revelation. It will be to his honour to have a handsome veil drawn here, and that herein he is not alone, but in the same fault with divers of the ancient fathers and modern writers, Hierom, Luther, etc. The horrid lies and reproaches cast on him you will not forget. 'Tis said of Calvin, scarce ever any was more belied and abused than he; so that, besides many others, M. Drelincourt, one of the Protestant ministers of Paris, anno 1667, printed a handsome large book in defence of him, which is worth the reading.

Of his great and many sufferings from the high episcopal party, though he was so much for peace (which many others of

them much disliked), to the ever lasting shame of such; especially that carriage of my Lord Jeffreys, when before him in his house (Mr Jacomb, as I remember, was by then) when his lady (yet living) desired him to be more fair; and how used in Westminster Hall; nothing more honourable than when the Rev Baxter stood at bay, berogued, abused, despised; never more great than then. Draw this well. (You will say, this will not be borne; it may, if well done; and if it will not be borne now, it will hereafter; and the time will come when it may and will be known). This is the noblest part of his life, and not that he might have been a bishop. The apostle (2 Corinth. xi.) when he would glory, mentions his labours and stripes and bonds and imprisonments; his troubles, weariness, dangers, reproaches; not his riches and coaches and honours and advantages. God lead us into this spirit, and free us from the worldly one which we are apt to run into.

And be sure to give a clear account of the transactions at the Savoy (1660), of which he hath told me he had a fuller account amongst his papers than any yet extant, and how truly he foresaw and told what would follow, on the course they took; and take notice of the misrepresentation of him by Bishop Morley, and, the rather, because Dr Turner (since Bishop of Ely) in his animadversions on the 'Naked Truth' (1676), licensed by the Bishop of London, p. 14, mentions the notable effect that conferences with the leaders of the Nonconformists might have; which (says he) appears in what the Bishop of Winchester (then of Worcester) printed of what passed in that short one of the Savoy; that so soon as it came to writing in syllogism, they were driven to assert, that whatsoever may be the occasion of sin in any person must be taken away. (But did they dispute, then, in syllogisms and in writing? I question it.) And p. 26, if he could see a conference whose moderators were designed to see all done in strict form of argument, and the ratiocinators on both sides might have days given them to review if anything had slipped from them, that there might be no lying at the catch; he should hope by such a counsel as this to see the church in her ancient splendour and glory. And what hindered but the bishops might have had such a one if they had desired it? And what advantage got Dr Gunning, Bishop of Chich-

ester, by disputing with Mr John Corbet? And did not Bishop Morley lie at the catch with Mr Baxter? But it's time to end. Might it not do well to reprint some of Mr Baxter's little pieces together, as his 'Call to the unconverted'; 'Now or Never', 'and they made light of Him', his sermon before the House of Commons, before King Charles II coming in; and his book of 'Catholic communion or Unity' (in 8 vo.), as I think he calls it? Dear Sir, I pray God be with you in this good work; you have a fair opportunity to teach all sorts many useful things, and you have a grave savoury style, and as I said at first, make not too much haste, though you be pressed to it. It will prove a work of many months to do it well; and *sat cito* (you know) *si sat bene*. Excuse this freedom.

From

Your unfeigned friend and servant,

T.¹

'These

For my worthy friend

Mr Matthew Sylvester, at

his house in Charterhouse-yard,

London'.

¹ Comparison with the signed letter of June 2, 1680 (B. MSS., Letters, ii, 78) clearly proves identity.

INDEX OF PERSONS

- Adeney, W. F., 267
 Adney, Beatrice, 267
 „ Richard, 267
 Albemarle, Duke of. *See* Monk, George
 Alley, William (Bp.), 225
 Amyraldus (Amyrant), Moses, 235, 236, 237, 238
 Andrewes, Lancelot (Bp.), 215, 225
 Annesley, Dr. Samuel, 32, 208
 Argyll, Countess of. *See*
 „ Earl of. *See*
 Aristotle, 248
 Arlington, Earl of. *See* Bennet, Henry
 Armine, Lady Mary, 87 *n.* 5.
 Ashe, Simeon, 18, 235
 Ashurst, Sir Henry, 38, 87 *n.* 5, 144, 145, 157
- Baber Sir John, 29, 158, 166, 167
 Bagshaw, Edward, 137, 176, 203
 Baillie, Robert, 235
 Balcarres, Countess of. *See* Lindsay, Jean
 „ Earl of. *See* Lindsay, Colin
 Ball, Nathaniel, 190
 Bancroft, John (Bp.), 213, 220, 221
 Bandius (? Bangius), Thomas, 114
 Bard (Alderman), 38
 Barlow, Thomas (Bp.), 186, 211, 212
 Baronius, Cæsar, 279
 Barrow, Henry, 192 *n.* 1, 201, 202
 Barton, William, 163
 Bates, Dr. William, 19, 27, 30, 70 *n.* 1, 78, 81 *n.* 2, 111, 145, 165, 215
 Bath, Earl of. *See* Grenville, John
 Baxter, Aaron, 110, 112
 „ Edward, 109
 „ Elizabeth, 109
 „ John, 109
 „ Joyce, 109
 „ Martin, 110, 112
 „ Moses, 110, 112
 „ Richard, 109
 „ Mrs. Richard (Margaret Charlton), 7, 10, 17, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 60, 71, 73, 74, 79, 80, 86, 87 *n.* 5, 88, 91, 92, 95, 97, 99, 100, 108, 110, 113, 114, 119, 121, 125, 165, 275
 „ William, 7, 87 *n.* 5, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127
- Beal, Mr., 19
 Beaufort, Duke of. *See* Somerset, Henry

- Benen, John, 291
 Bennet, Henry (1st Earl of Arlington), 33, 66, 70, 75 *n.* 2
 Beresford, Richard, 89, 90, 91, 156, 157, 158, 159
 Berkeley, George (1st Earl of Berkeley), 153
 Bernard, St., 265
 Bernard, Sir John, 38 *n.*, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121
 Berry, James, 259
 Beverley, Thomas, 151, 178, 181 *n.*
 Billing, Mr. (of Oundle), 169
 Bilson, Thomas (Bp.), 213, 225
 Bohun Family, 267
 Bonaventura, St., 265
 Booth, Mr., 87 *n.* 5
 Boterus, John, 279
 Boyle, Robert, 48, 49, 52
 Boyle, Roger (1st Earl of Orrery), 76, 125, 170
 Bracegirdle, Mr. (Apothecary), 34
 Braddock, Edmund, 267
 „ Fortune, 267
 „ Mary, 267
 Bradford, Mr., 118, 126
 Bradstreete, Simon, 48
 Bramhall, John (Archbp.), 137, 215
 Brandon (Rev. Mr.), 87 *n.* 5
 Breirwood, Edward, 278, 279, 280
 „ Sir Robert, 278 *n.*
 Bridges, Brooke, 87 *n.* 5
 „ Colonel, 87 *n.* 5
 „ John (Bp.), 225
 Bridgman, Sir Orlando, 27, 29, 32, 273
 Brochardus, 280
 Brooke, Lord. *See* Greville, Robert
 Brunsen, Anthony, 171
 Bryan, John, 65
 Buckingham, Duke of. *See* Villiers, George
 Bunny, Edmund, 265, 266
 Bunyan, John, 56, 57, 58, 59
 Burgess, Daniel, 235
 „ „ the younger, 110, 112
 Burnet, Gilbert (Bp.), 268
 Burton, Hezekiah, 30
 Bushell, Ruth, 111, 164, 165
 Butler, James (1st Duke of Ormond), 153
 Butler Family, 267
 Calamy, Edmund (historian), 8, 10, 16 *n.*, 144, 159, 164, 166 *n.* 1, 173
 Calamy, Edward the elder, 18

- Calvin, John, 114, 162, 208, 215, 236, 237
 Caril (Caryll), John, 28
 Carlyle, Thomas, 159
 Carryer, Richard, 169
 „ Thomas, 169
 Cartwright, Thomas, 221
 Case, Thomas, 85 *n.* 1
 Castell, Edmund, 48
 Charles I, 221
 Charles II, 10, 18, 22, 25, 29, 32, 33, 35, 44, 46, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75,
 96, 129, 131, 133, 134 *n.* 1, 135 *n.* 2, 140, 173, 180, 213, 221,
 230, 256, 273, 274, 295
 Charlton, Margaret. *See* Baxter, Mrs. Richard
 „ Robert (? Francis), 113
 „ Robert, 116
 Cheney, John, 188
 Chiverton, Sir Richard, 87 *II.* 5
 Cicero, 248
 Clare, Countess of, 87 *n.* 5
 Clare, Sir Herbert, 219
 Clarendon, Earl of. *See* Hyde, Edward
 Clark, Thomas, 171 *n.* 3
 Clarke, John, 140
 Clarke, Samuel, 275
 Clifford, Thomas (1st Baron C. of Chudleigh), 75 *n.* 2
 Clinton, Lady, 87 *n.* 5
 Cokayn, George, 57
 Compton, Henry (Bp.), 92, 148, 150, 187, 211
 Constantine, Emperor, 229
 Cooper, Anthony Ashley (1st Earl of Shaftesbury), 22, 75
 Corbet, Frances, 41, 42
 „ John, 32, 41, 77, 78, 100, 295
 „ Mrs., 100
 Cork and Ross, Bp. of, 258 *n.* 2
 Cornish, Henry, 177
 Cotton, John, 43
 Coventry, Henry, 89, 91
 Coventry, Sir John, 92 *n.* 3
 Coxe, Mr. (Printer), 125
 Coxe, Thomas (M.D.), 89, 96
 Cradock, Dr., 75
 Cradock (Rev. Mr.), 266
 Cranmer, Thomas (Archbp.), 220, 225
 Craven, William (1st Earl of Craven), 153
 Crisp, Dr. Tobias, 174
 Croft, Herbert (Bp.), 211
 Cromwell, Oliver, 34, 75, 207

- Cudworth, Ralph, 52, 162
 Cyprian, 72, 135
- Danby, Earl of. *See* Osborne, Sir Thomas
 Dangerfield, Thomas, 146
 Danvers, Henry, 90
 D'Aranda, Peter, 171 *n.* 3
 Darby, Mr. 140
 Davenant, John (Bp.), 225
 Davis, Sir Thomas, 84, 88
 Davy, Mr. (Merchant), 48
 De Charlton, John, 152 *n.* 2
 De Renty, Mr., 291
 Derodon, David, 278
 Digby, Sir Kenelm, 88 *n.* 3
 Dioscorus, 278
 Dodwell, Henry the elder, 214, 216, 217, 219, 223 *n.*, 224, 282, 283
 Downham, William (Bp.), 225
 Drelincourt, Charles, 293
- Earle, Dr. Jabez, 166 *n.* 1, 171 *n.* 3
 Eccleston, Edward, 255, 256
 Edmund (Crouchback), 267
 Edward I, 267
 Edward VI, 225
 Edwards, Thomas, 234
 Eliot, John, 47, 291
 Elizabeth, Queen, 133, 199
 Ellis, Sir William, 268
 Ennis, Mr., 16
 Erasmus, 114
 Exeter, Countess of, 38 *n.*
- Faldo, Thomas, 38, 255
 Fawler, George, 266
 Ferdinand, St., 267
 Ferguson, Robert, 172
 Field, Dr. Richard, 225
 Fitzgerald Family, 267
 Fitz-James, Lady, 87 *n.* 5
 Fletcher, W. G. D., 109, 267
 Foley, Thomas, 38, 255
 Ford, Sir Richard, 68
 Ford, Dr. Simon, 272
 Foret, Mr., 43
 Fountain, John (Sergt.), 35, 38 *n.*, 74
 Fowler, Edward, 8, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59

- Fox, George, 90
 Francis De Sales, St., 265
 Freeman, Francis, 171 *n.* 3
 French (Rev. Mr.), 87 *n.* 5

 Galen, 242
 Garret, William, 171 *n.* 3
 Garvie, Dr. A. E., 101 *n.*
 Gassendus, Pierre, 65
 Gerson, John, 265
 Gifford, Mr., 29, 272
 Glanvil, Joseph, 49, 51, 52, 53
 Good, Thomas, 185
 Goodwin, John, 234, 235
 Goodwin, Thomas, 29, 43, 66
 Gore, Charles (Bp.), 62
 Grenville, John (1st Earl of Bath), 172
 Greville, Robert (2nd Baron Brooke), 94, 162
 Griffis, Roger, 171 *n.* 3
 Grosart, A. B., 198 *n.*
 Grotius, Hugo, 215
 Gunning, Peter (Bp.), 77, 186, 212, 215, 283, 294

 Hale, Sir Matthew, 20, 21, 52, 63, 92, 14–5, 268
 Hale, William, 171 *n.* 3
 Hammond, Dr. Henry, 291
 Hampden, John, 94
 Hampden, Richard, 24, 78 *n.* 2, 87 *n.* 5, 123
 Hanmer, Mrs. 116
 Harley, Sir Edward, 87 *n.* 5
 Henly, Mr., 87 *n.* 5
 Henry III, 267
 Henry, Matthew, 151
 Henson, H. Hensley (Bp.), 101 *n.*
 Herbert, William (1st Earl of Powis), 150, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 167
 Herne, Sir Nathaniel, 84 *n.* 2
 Heylen (Heylyn), Peter, 215
 Hinckley, John, 188
 Hippocrates, 121
 Hobbes, Thomas, 196, 197, 226
 Hollis, Lady Eleanor, 87 *n.* 5
 Holloway, Judge, 168
 Hooker, Richard, 193, 213, 220, 226, 227
 Hopkins, John, 163
 Horace, 127
 Horton, Dr. Thomas, 29
 Huddleston, John, 131

- Humphrey, John, 78, 98, 116 *n.* 2, 130, 136
 Humphrey, Mrs., 11611. 2
 Huss, John, 64 *n.* 1
 Hyde, Edward (1st Earl of Clarendon), 19, 25, 29, 219
 Ignatius, 72
 Jackson (M.D.), 292
 Jacombe, Dr. Thomas, 32, 78, 143 *n.* 3, 294
 James I, 199, 221
 James II (Duke of York), 25, 66, 75, 129, 131, 132, 134 *n.* 1, 135 *n.* 2, 146,
 151, 152, 153, 166, 168, 171, 180, 227, 273 *n.* 1
 Jane, William, 94
 Jeffreys, Sir George (Justice), 9, 143, 144, 146, 148, 150, 285, 291, 294
 Jenkyn, William, 32
 Jennings (Capt.), 139, 140
 Jerome, St., 293
 Jewel, John (Bp.), 213, 225
 Justin Martyr, 213, 225
 Keting (Informer), 81, 83, 84 *n.* 2, 85 *n.* 1
 King (Colonel), 66
 King, Simon, 169
 Knowles, John, 88 *n.* 3
 Laertes, 248
 Lamplugh, Thomas (Bp.), 93, 133
 Langham, Sir James, 87 *n.* 5
 Laud, William (Archbp.), 179, 212, 213, 215, 221, 226
 Lauderdale, Earl of. *See* Maitland, John
 Leavesley, Thomas, 171 *n.* 3
 L'Estrange, Roger, 126, 127, 128, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 161,
 186, 188, 213, 214, 260, 285
 Lindsey, Colin (3rd Earl of Balcarres), 110 *n.* 1
 „ Jean (Countess of Balcarres), 110, 111
 Lindsey, Dr. T. M., 236
 Lloyd, David, 81
 Lloyd, William (Bp.), 94, 95, 123, 211
 Lobb, Stephen, 208
 Luther, Martin, 230, 277, 293
 Macaulay, Thomas Babington (Baron), 129, 144
 Macmillan, J. V., 269
 Mahomet, 279
 Maitland, John (2nd Earl and 1st Duke of Lauderdale), 10, 36 *n.* 1, 44, 46 *n.*
 75 *n.* 3, 92
 Manchester, Earl of. *See* Montagu, Edward

- Manton, Dr. Thomas, 29, 30, 32, 33, 66, 78, 95
 Marcus Antonius, 248
 Marshall (Informer), 85 *n.* 1
 Marsilio Ficino, 248
 Martin, Peter Christopher, 171
 Martineau, James, 197
 Mary, Queen, 195
 Mary of Modena, 75
 Mastard, William, 219
 Mather, Increase, 165, 178
 Maurice, Frederick Denison, 269
 " " " Sir, 269
 Mayot, Robert, 134
 Mayward, Sir John, 87 *n.* 5
 Menander, 248
 Micklethwaite, Sir John (M.D.), 17
 Milton, John, 98
 Molinreus, Ludovicus, 235
 Mompesson, John, 51, 52
 Monk, George (1st Duke of Albemarle), 140
 Montagu, Edward (2nd Earl of Manchester), 83
 Montagu, Henry, 83
 Montagu, Lucy, 83
 More, Dr. Henry, 51, 52, 53, 136, 160, 161, 176 *n.* I, 177
 Morley, George (Bp.), 15 *n.* 2, 50, 76, 77, 78, 79, 113, 137, 212, 215, 218,
 222, 227, 262, 294, 295
 Morris, Thomas, 170
 Mowbray, Lord (of Axholme), 267
 Nerius, Philip (St.), 291
 Nest (Rev. Mr.), 29
 Nestorius, 278
 Nethersole, Sir Francis, III
 North, Sir Francis, 134
 Norton, Henry, 176
 Nowel, Dr. Alexander, 225
 Nye, Philip, 29, 199

 Oasland, Henry, 258 *n.* 1
 Oates, Titus, 129, 144
 Offiey (Mr.), 38 *n.*
 Old, Michael, 266
 Orme, William, 8, 144, 166 *n.* 1
 Ormonde, Duke of. *See* Butler, James
 Orrery, Earl of (Baron Broghill). *See* Boyle, Roger
 Osborne, Sir Thomas (1st Earl of Danby), 76
 Overton, William (Bp.), 267

- Owen, Charles, 171 *n.* 3
 Owen, Dr. John, 10, 15 *n.* 4, 29, 32, 42, 57, 58, 66, 70 *n.* 1, 202, 203, 204, 205, 208, 209, 210, 217, 234
 Owtram, Dr. William, 29, 272
- Paget, Francis (Bp.), 220
 Palmer, Samuel, 166 *n.* 1
 Parker, 186
 Parry, Justice, 92, 95
 Parsons, Robert, 265
 „ William, 171 *n.* 3
 Patrick, Dr. Simon, 29
 Pearsall, Mr., 157
 Pearson, John (Bp.), 79
 Penn, William, 42, 90, 91
 Phillips, Colonel, 33
 Phillips, J., 34, 37
 Photius, 279
 Pilkington, James (Bp.), 225
 Pitcairn, Alexander, 234
 Plato, 247, 248
 Plautus, 248
 Player, Sir Thomas, 72
 Plotinus, 247
 Plutarch, 248
 Poole, Matthew, 48, 78
 Postellus, 279
 Poultney, Sir William, 81, 83
 Powis, Earl of. *See* Herbert, William
 Prideaux, John (Bp.), 225
 Pryn, Dr., 172
 Pym, John, 94
- Quintillian, 114
- Rainbowe, Edward (Bp.), 211
 Rand, Mrs., 42
 Read, Joseph, 80, 85 *n.* 1, 87 *n.* 3, 93, 236
 Reignolds, Mrs., 87 *n.* 5
 Reynolds, Dr. Edward, 235
 Reynolds, John, 34
 Rich, Mary (Countess of Warwick), 83, 87 *n.* 5
 Rickards, Lady, 87 *n.* 5
 Ridgeley (M.D.), 117, 119, 120, 123
 Rive, Dr., 34
 Robinson, Sir John, 66
 Rosewell, Thomas, 85 *n.* 1

- Ross, Thomas, 34, 37
 Rous, Francis, 163
 Rous, Sir Thomas, 139

 Sabbes, Mr., 92
 Sacheverell, Dr. Henry, 110
 Sadler, Lady, 123, 124
 St. John, Lady Joanna, 110, 111, 112
 „ Oliver, 111 *n.* 2
 „ Walter, 111 *n.* 2
 Sangar, Gabriel, 93, 94
 Saravia, Dr. Adrian, 225
 Sawyer, Sir Robert, 134
 Saywell, Dr. William, 233
 Seddon (Rev. Mr.), of Derbyshire, 91
 Segrave, Lord, 267
 Seneca, 61, 248
 Severus, 278
 Seymour, Charles (6th Duke of Somerset), 155
 Sheldon, Gilbert (Archbp.), 25, 212, 262
 Sheldon, Sir Joseph, 93
 Sherlock, Dr. William, 214, 216, 277, 282, 283, 284
 Shorter, Sir John, 57
 Simmons, Mr. (Bookseller), 137
 Simonds, Richard, 266
 Sise, Sergeant, 38 *n.*
 Skippon, Philip (Major General), 20 *n.* 2
 Skrymshire, Elizabeth, 267
 „ John, 267
 Smalbroke, Richard (Bp.), 112 *n.* 3
 Smith, Francis, 151, 152, 153, 155
 Smith, John (Platonist,) 56, 241, 247
 Smith, Sir William, 98
 Somerfield, Mr., 139, 140
 Somerset, Duke of. *See* Seymour, Charles
 Somerset, Henry (1st Duke of Beaufort), 153
 Soultetus, 291
 Southampton, Earl of. *See* Wriothesley, Thomas
 Southmead, Joseph, 170
 Spang Mr. (of Middelburgh), 235 *n.* 1
 Sparry, Ambrose, 256
 Spinoza, Benedict, 196, 197, 198
 Squib, Mr., 154
 Squire, Mr., 156
 Stanley, Thomas, 87 *n.* 5
 Sternhold, Thomas, 163
 Sterry, Peter, 162

- Stillingfleet, Dr. Edward, 29, 75, 76,78, 130, 180, 187, 188, 220, 224, 225
 Stubbs, Henry, 64 *n.* 1, 272, 282, 283
 Summons, Mrs. B., 143 *n.* 1
 „ Nevil, 143 *n.* 1
 Sylvester, Matthew, 8,9, 10,80 *n.* 1, 89 *n.* 6, 95, 111, 145, 146 *n.* 1, 163,
 164, 165,166, 233, 285, 288, 291, 295
 Talbot, Dorothy, 267
 „ Sir John, 267
 Tallents, Francis, 78, 174
 Tawney, R. H., 226 *n.* 1
 „ „ Mrs., 62
 Tertullian, 206, 277
 Thelridge, Mrs., 123
 Thomas, Canon, 269
 Thomas, William (Bp.), 211
 Thompson, Major, 178 *n.* 1
 Thorndike, Herbert, 215, 283
 Tillotson, John (Archbp.), 9, 29, 76, 78, 79, 94, 143, 145, 180, 291, 295
 Tombes, John, 90, 199, 254, 255
 Trecolonel, Countess of, 87 *n.* 5
 Trevor, Sir John, 22, 66
 Troughton, John, 175, 176
 „ „ (Jr.), 176, 177
 Turner, Francis (Bp.), 294
 Turner, John, 73, 79, 81, 83, 87
 „ John, 162
 „ Melchizedek, 162
 Twiss, William, 41, 236 *n.* 1
 Upton, Mrs. (nee Charlton), 23
 Usher, James (Archbp.), 62, 236 *n.* 1
 Vane, Sir Henry, 162
 Vaughan, Sir John, 37, 67
 Venatus, Paul, 278
 Vermuyden, Mrs, 116 *n.* 2, 122, 123, 124
 Villiers, George (2nd Duke of Buckingham), 29, 32
 Vines, Richard, 236 *n.* 1
 Wallop, Richard, 38 *n.*
 Ward, Mr., 156
 Ward, Seth (Bp.), 67, 78,212
 Warwick, Mary, Countess of. *See* Rich, Mary
 Webb, Alderman, 41
 Welles, Lord, 267
 Wharton, Philip (4th Baron), 78

- Whateleys, Mr., 118
Whichcote, Dr. Benjamin, 29, 75, 238, 241
White, Thomas, 29
Whitgift, John (Archbp.), 213, 220
Wilcox, John, 172
Wilkins, John (Bp.), 30, 31
William 111, 131 *n.* 1, 132, 134 *n.* 3, 171, 227
Williams, Daniel, 233
Williams, David, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157
Williams, Moses, 112
Williamson, Sir Joseph, 66
Willis, Robert, 197
Wilsby, Thomas, 256 *n.* 1
Wilson, John, 257, 258
Windham, Sir Wadham, 38 *n.*
Withins, Sir Francis, 286
Wood, Robert, 171 *n.* 3
Woodbridge, Benjamin, 46
 „ John, 46, 47
Wriothesley, Thomas (4th Earl of Southampton), 26
Zanzalus, Jacob, 278

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

- Abdication of King James 11, 131, 132
Account of my Dissent from Dr. Sherlock, An, 283
Account of my Doctrine and Practice, An, 188
Account of the Reasons . . . against Communion with Parish Churches, An, 15 n. 4
 Act of Uniformity, 15, 16, 72, 149, 168, 180, 213
 Acton, Residence of Baxter at, 20
 Acts for Banishment, 213
 Address to King, 167, 168
 Advice on Study, 114, 115, 117–119
Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction, 179, 213 n. 1, 215, 216, 227, 266, 273
 Amyraldisme, 235–237
Animadversions on The Naked Truth, by F. Turner, 294
Answer to Mr. Dodwell and Dr. Sherlock, An, 214, 217, 218, 220, 223
 Antinomian Controversy, 174, 175, 202
Aphorisms of Justification, 58, 234
Apology for the Nonconformist Ministry, An, 61 n. 2, 211
Appeal to the Light, An, 59
 Armenian Christians, 279
 Arminianism, 59, 237
 Assembly of Divines, 202
 Astronomy, 242

 Baxterianism, 232–252
 Bible, Baxter's, 268–269
 Bloomsbury, Baxter's residence at, 74
 Books, Seizure of Baxter's, 88
Breviate of Fifty Controversies about Justification, 175, 176
Breviate of the Life of Margaret Baxter, 101
 Bunyan's relations with Baxter, 57–59

 Cabal, 75
Cain and Abel Malignity, 180
Call to the Unconverted, 57, 125
 Cambridge Platonism, 53, 56, 247
Casulist uncas'd, by R. L'Estrange, 138
Catholic Communion defended, 149, 203, 205, 208
Catholic Theology, 62, 64, 250, 253
Certain Disputations . . ., 263
Certainty of the World of Spirits, 180
 Character of Baxter, 253–266
 Charterhouse Yard Chapel, 95, 164, 171
Christian Directory, 62, 63, 227, 250, 252
Christian Gospel defended, The, 180
Church Concord . . ., 180

- Churchmanship of Baxter, 226–232
Communion with the Trinity, by J. Owen, 210
 Comprehension, 32
 Conformists, Character of, 77–78
 Connivance of Dissenters, 68
 Conscience, Nonconformist, 194
 Conventicle Acts, 23, 32, 33, 66, 67, 83
 Copts, 278
 Corporation Act, 25, 26, 27, 84, 213
 Correspondents of Baxter, 46–59
 Covent Garden Chapel, 95
Critica Synopsis, by M. Poole, 48
 Cross, Baxter on the Use of the, 190
Cure of Church Divisions, 47, 80, 186, 200, 203, 257

 Death of Baxter, 165
 „ of Mrs. Baxter, 275, 276
 Debate of Baxter with Penn, 90, 91
De Cive, by T. Hobbes, 197
 Declaration of Indulgence, 56, 57, 68–71, 81
Declaration of Indulgence, by W. Bates, 69 n. 1, 70 n. 1
Defence of the Nonconformist Plea for Peace, 188
 Description of Baxter, by M. Sylvester, 288–290
Design of Christianity, The, by E. Fowler, 53, 56
 Diocesan Episcopacy, 216, 217
Dirt wip'd off. . . , Anon, 57
Dissertation on set Forms of Prayer, (MS.), 17
Divine Life, The, 15 n. 1
Dying Thoughts upon Philippians, i. 23, 97, 125

Ecclesiastical Polity, by R. Hooker, 226
 Ejected Ministers, Relief of, 19
English Nonconformity as under K. Charles II and K. James II, 134, 135, 180
Enquiries touching Diversities of Languages and Religions, by E. Breirwood, 278
 Epicureans, 247
 Eutychians, 278

 Fire of London, 27–29
 Five Mile Act, 41–43, 213
Free Discourse on the Latitude Men, by E. Fowler, 56
 Free Prayer, 206–208
 Friendship of Baxter with Lauderdale, 44
 Funeral of Baxter, 166 n. 1

 Georgians, 279
 German Translations of Baxter's Books, 171
Grace Abounding, by J. Bunyan, 57

- Greek Christians, 277
Grotian Religion Discovered, The, 137
- Habeas Corpus Act, 129, 143
 Hampden, Baxter's residence at, 24
 Happy Union, *The*, 177
 Harvard College, *The*, 48, 88 *n.* 3
 Hell, 244
Historical Accounts of Apparitions and Witches, 52, 125
Holy Commonwealth, The, 98
- Imprisonment of Baxter, 35, 36, 37, 38, 150, 151
Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, by W. Sherlock, 283
 Independents, 31, 199, 203, 204
Institutio Christianæ Religionis, by J. Calvin, 236
Irenicon, by E. Stillingfleet, 220, 224, 225, 283
 Interior Conformity with Jesus Christ, p. 265, *n.* 2
- Kindred, Baxter's, 109–110
 Kingly Power, 227–229
- Lambeth Conference, 262
 Landing of William of Orange, 174
 Licence, Baxter's, 72, 81, 90
Lift of Hale, by G. Burnet, 268
 Liturgies, Baxter on, 190, 201, 205, 206, 207
Lutherus Redivivus, by J. Troughton, 175
- Maronites, 280
 Melchites, 279
 Memorial to Baxter, 100, 101
Methodus Theologiæ, 45, 61 *n.* 2, 63, 162, 250, 253
 Militia Act, 213
 Millennium, 181, 182
Moral Prognostication, by T. Good, 185
More Proofs of Infant-Church Membership, 90
Mystery of Iniquity, by R. L'Estrange, 160
- Naked Truth, The*, by H. Croft, 211
 Natural Religion, 238–250
 Nestorians, 278, 280
Nonconformists' Plea for Peace, The, 187, 188
 Nonconformity, Baxter on, 185–198
 No Popery persecution, 75
- Obedient Patience in general . . .*, 141
 Ordination, Baxter's, 31, 218, 219

- Ordination, Episcopal and Presbyterian, 226–232
Origenes Sacrae, by E. Stillingfleet, 187
 Oxenden St. Chapel, 87–89, 91, 92, 94, 95
 Oxford Act, 93

 Papists, Baxter's attitude to, 129, 130, 131, 264, 265
Paraphrase of the New Testament, 136, 141, 142, 147, 148, 149, 285
Paraphrase of the Psalms, 163
Paraselene dismantled . . . or Baxterianism barefaced, Anon., 234
Paroenesis ad aedificatores Imperii in Imperio, by L. Molinceus, 235
 Pedigree of Baxter, 267
Petition for Peace, 136, 138
 Petition of Baxter to K. James II, 151, 152
 Petition to Conformists, Baxter's, 270–272
 Physician, Baxter as, 292
Pilgrim's Progress, The, by J. Bunyan, 57
 Pinner's Hall Sermon, Fee for, 73
 Plague of London, 24, 25
Polyglot Lexicon, by E. Castell, 48
Poor Husbandman's Advocate, 109, 181, 231, 232
 Popish Plot, The, 129–132
 Prayer Book, The, 193, 194
 Prelatists, 211–223
 Prosecution of Baxter, 83, 84, 89, 91, 92, 96, 97, 98

Quakerism no Christianity, by J. Faldo, 42
 Quakers, 67, 90, 91, 167, 238

Reasons for the Christian Religion, 65, 239, 240, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 249
 Reformed Churches, 277
Reformed Liturgy, 64
Relapsed Apostate, The, by R. L'Estrange, 137
Resolution . . ., by Parsons-Bunny, 265
Review of the State of Christians' Infants, 90
 Rye House Plot, 97, 98, 132

 Sacrament, Baxter's view of the, 74, 219
Sacrilegious Desertion of the Holy Ministry rebuked, 186
Saint's Everlasting Rest, The, 57, 94, 170, 178, 181, 254
 St. James's Market House, Baxter's preaching at, 85, 86, 87
Saint or a Brute, A, 61 n. 1
 Salter's Hall Conference, 233
Salus Electorum Sanguis Jesu, by J. Owen, 58
 Savoy Conference, The, 136, 193, 254
Scripture Gospel defended, The, 242
Second Admonition to Edward Bagshaw, 137
Second Defence of the Meer Nonconformity, 53, 130, 188

- Second Part of the Nonconformist's Plea for Peace, The*, 61 n. 2, 130 n. 1
 Separatists, 189, 199–211
 Service, Baxter's Church, 80, 81
Short Discourse of National Churches, A, 179, 224
 Sion College Library, Destruction of, 27
 Slander of Baxter, L'Estrange's, 138–140
 Stoics, 247
 Student and Writer, Baxter as, 60–65
 Subscription under Toleration Act, Baxter's, 174
 Supernatural Revelation, 250–252
 Superstition, 52
 Synod of Dort, 235, 237

 Test Act, 75 n. 1
Third Defence of the Cause of Peace, A, 138, 188
 Toleration Act, 173
 Toleration, Movement for, 30
 Totteridge, Residence of Baxter at, 39, 40, 41
Tractatus Theologicus Politicus, by B. Spinoza, 196
Treatise of Episcopacy, A, 61 n. 2, 224
Treatise of Justifying Righteousness, A, 90
Treatise of Knowledge and Love compared, A, 180
Treatise of Perseverance, A, by J. Owen, 234
Treatise of Universal Redemption, A, 236
 Trial of Baxter by Jeffreys, 143, 146
 Trinity, The, 162
True and Only Way of Concord, The, 138
True Defence of the Meer Nonconformist, A, 49
True History of Councils, 88 n. 3, 212 n. 1, 213 n. 2, 233, 258
Tusculan Disputations, by Cicero, 248
Two Dissertations of Original Sin, 90

 Unitarianism, 233
 University Connections, W. Baxter on, 122

 Vestry Act, 213

 Westminster Assembly, 235
 Worcester Association, 263
 Waterhall, Edward, Bishop, 258