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 BAXTER



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BY

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THOSE who are well acquainted with the life and times of Baxter will soon perceive how greatly the writer of this sketch is indebted to Mr. Orme, Principal Tulloch, and the impartial historian of the period, Dr. Stoughton. The untimely death of Dean Stanley, who had promised to write an estimate of Baxter's Review of his own life, has deprived the reader of these pages of what would have been a true distinction.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

THERE is no figure among the eminent Englishmen of the seventeenth century more interesting than that of Richard Baxter. To some he appears to occupy the foremost position in the ranks of Puritan divines. To others he seems to recall many of the characteristics of the great schoolmen of the Middle Ages. Whatever opinions may be held as to the part he played in the political struggles of his time, his conduct as a pastor and his renown as the author of some of the best-known devotional and hortatory works in the English language have secured for him a lasting place in the religious annals of England. He was born at the village of Eaton Constantine, in Shropshire, on the 12th of November, 1615. His father had originally possessed some fortune, but had squandered his means in gambling. The name of his mother was Beatrice, a daughter of Richard Adeny, of Rowton, near High Ercall, the seat of Lord Newport.

The first ten years of Baxter's life were spent in his grandfather's house. Not long before his birth his father had experienced a remarkable religious change. He gave much of his time to reading the Bible, and seems

to have given his adherence to the men who were endeavouring to raise the standard of belief and practice in his neighbourhood. There is no reason to believe that the picture which Baxter draws of the clergy he saw about him in his youth is at all an unfair one. The incumbent of the parish was eighty years of age. He never preached, and employed labourers and people of indifferent character to read the lessons in church. A son of his own, a notorious gamester, forced his way into holy orders and became his father's curate. Neglect on the part of the teachers produced the usual result. Few could read. Bibles were rarely to be met with in cottages. Here and there men were to be found ready to rise into open rebellion against their teachers. There was no disposition, however, to stray beyond the confines of the Church. It is clear from the interesting notices in Baxter's "Reminiscences," that attachment to the Liturgy was still strong. Such forms of private prayer as were in use were the Collects and short ejaculations of the Prayer-Book. Baxter says of his father, that he never "scrupled common prayer, nor ceremonies, nor spake against bishops, nor even so much as prayed but by a book or form." There is some touch of exaggeration in the catalogue he draws out of his youthful fancies. He believed that the foundation of his miserable health was laid in his "excessive gluttonous eating of apples and pears," and it is clear that he was sickly from his birth. The love for tales and romances, which seems to him so terrible, is in modern

times looked upon as a healthy instinct. He must, however, have been thoroughly unfortunate in his teachers. The curates of the parish were ignorant and sottish; and what learning he acquired during the first ten years of his life, he owed to them. A more competent guide awaited him when he returned to his father's house, and during two years he seems to have gained something from his new tutor, who, though competent, was far from conscientious. At the Free School of Wroxeter, under the charge of Mr. John Owen, he made his first acquaintance with classical authors. Here, too, he had schoolfellows of some position: the sons of Sir Richard Newport, and Dr. Allestree, one day destined to become Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Provost of Eton. Owen was anxious that Baxter should be placed under the charge of Mr. Wichstead, chaplain at Ludlow, instead of proceeding at once to the University. Every one who is familiar with Baxter's writings must deplore the abandonment of his academical career. The chaplain at Ludlow neglected his duty, and his pupil was left to himself. He had time however and books at his command; and an increasing love for theological reading seems to have shown itself at this period of his history. He was fortunate, too, in finding at Ludlow the true friend, of whom he says, "he was the first that ever I heard pray extempore, and that taught me so to pray." But the two friends were in after years separated; and he who may be said to have influenced Baxter in high and noble ways became

the victim of self-indulgence. On Baxter's return from Ludlow he found his old master, Owen, in the last stage of consumption, and at the desire of a neighbouring nobleman, he undertook the charge of a school. He began shortly after this to study in real earnest. A terrible break-down ensued. His health gave way entirely; but he looked back upon this time as one of real spiritual growth. Few passages in the memoirs of saintly men are more touching and expressive than the simple recital he gives of his spiritual progress during this illness. In early years he had dreamt of literary distinction; but he was now convinced that his whole life must be spent in simple surrender of his powers to God. It is singular that the book, lent, it is said, by a poor man to his father, and to which he owed much of his first real interest in practical religion, known by the name of "Bunny's Resolution," was written by a Jesuit of the name of Parsons, though edited by Bunny, a stern Puritan of the strictest sect.

It is difficult to conceive that such writings as Bunny's and the "Bruised Reed," praised highly by Baxter, could really have effected the great change he ascribes to them. All the movements of his mind were gradually tending towards theology. He mentions with delight the precise moment when he began to study theology as a science; and it is also clear that his bodily maladies became powerful motives for entrance into the ministry. He already longed, in his own words, to preach as a dying man to dying men; and at this period in his life

he began the practice of habitual meditation, which produced in after days "The Saint's Rest." Then came a time when one of his most remarkable experiences occurred. Charles the First had lately come to the throne. The position of Baxter in life was such that he might reasonably expect to rise in life through Court favour. His old master, Mr. Wichstead, had considerable influence with Sir Henry Herbert, master of the revels, and to his good offices Baxter was entrusted, and actually spent a month at Court. The experiment was eminently unsuccessful. "I had quickly enough of the Court; when I saw a stage-play instead of a sermon on the Lord's Days in the afternoon, and saw what course was there in fashion, and heard little preaching but what was as to one part, against the Puritans, I was glad to be gone. At the same time it pleased God that my mother fell sick, and desired my return; and so I resolved to bid farewell to those kinds of employments and expectations."

Among the many voluminous writings of Baxter there are passages which bear considerable traces of the influence of Jacob Behmen. During his residence in London he made the acquaintance of Humphrey Blunden, afterwards known as the collector and publisher of some of Behmen's writings. It is hardly fanciful to suppose that it was from Blunden that Baxter derived his knowledge of the famous mystic. Like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Baxter levied contributions from all quarters; and although absolutely incapable of wilfully appropriating

other men's ideas, he may unconsciously have reproduced some of the sentences he had heard in Blunden's laboratory. Baxter left London about Christmas, 1633. After a severe frost there had come a great snowstorm. He met on the road a loaded wagon, and to escape it spurred his horse up a bank. The girths broke, and Baxter was thrown before the wheel of the wagon. Unaccountably the horses stopped, and his life was preserved. This almost miraculous preservation was constantly in his thoughts; and he describes with true pathos his return to his own home, where his mother's groans were heard throughout the house. After terrible sufferings she died, in May, 1634, and very shortly after her death the resolution to enter the ministry entirely mastered him. No one perhaps has ever experienced as fully as he did the intense desire to speak his own experience to others. Before him lay the world, full of sin, and yet replete with human interest. The great snowstorm which had begun at Christmas lasted until Easter, and in that dreary winter Baxter determined that his life should be given for his brethren. To the last he maintained his noble resolve. He wrote with no desire for fame, but simply from the interest he felt in speaking for what he believed to be truth. The dominant motive of his ministry was to be a preacher intent on saving the souls of men. At this time he began his studies in Hooker. It is a remarkable fact in the ecclesiastical history of the period, that the great work of Hooker should have already obtained such an influence and sway.

Although Baxter's father was called Puritan chiefly from his aversion to the "Book of Sports," he was favourable to a liturgy, and held some of the great Church writers in high esteem. Upon the whole, it may be said, that Baxter, in his view of the whole controversy, inclined towards the party of moderation. He does not rail against ceremonies. The chief fault he found with the Church, was her want of discipline. His view of Episcopacy can hardly be distinguished from that of Leighton. It is strange, however, to find that he was ignorant of the Homilies, and had entirely neglected the Ordinal.

In 1638, Mr. Foley of Stourbridge recovered some land at Dudley left for charitable uses. He built a school and added some endowment. The head mastership was offered to Baxter, and the Bishop of Worcester recognised the office as a title for holy orders. Bishop Thornborough was a man of distinction, and it would be interesting to know if he recognised in the pale and sickly student any of the qualities for which he afterwards became conspicuous. Baxter merely says: "Mr. Foley and James Berry going with me to Worcester at the time of ordination, I was ordained by the bishop, and had a licence to teach school." This entry does not seem to intimate that the revival of interest in the ember seasons, advocated by Laud as a needful reform, had reached the cathedral of Worcester. At Dudley Baxter found the people ready to listen to the sermons he delivered from time to time at the lecture service.

After a stay of about a year at Dudley he was invited to Bridgnorth as assistant to Mr. William Madstard, a man whom he describes as an excellent preacher. Pastoral work was more to his taste than the office of a teacher. At Bridgnorth he may be said to have commenced his ministerial labours in earnest. His friends were evidently all men who leant to the Nonconformist views.

The great struggle of the Civil War was about to commence, and there can be no doubt that he would be reckoned in the ranks of those who were stoutly opposed to all the opinions of Laud and his friends.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF PASTORAL WORK.

THE proceedings of the Long Parliament for many years past have been subjected to the most rigorous and searching criticisms. It is highly probable that the researches which have done so much for us in the elucidation of difficult questions can hardly now be prosecuted with the hope of obtaining more light. Baxter has left us an incomplete account of the state of feeling in his neighbourhood ; but he touches upon various points of the prevailing controversies in such a way as to make clear what the principal evils of the time were. The attempt of Laud to bind down the clergy to an absolute adherence to the existing polity, in what was called the *Et Cætera* Oath, raised a storm amongst the clergy who favoured Puritan views.

Baxter was one of those who took a strong part in opposition. He resumed his studies in divinity, and convinced himself that a system where such tyrannous abuse of power was possible, bore faint resemblance to the primitive ideal. Human nature is the same in all ages of history. A milder policy, such as that advocated in later days by the saintly Leighton and the vigorous Usher, might have had the effect of restraining the bolder

spirits of the Puritan faction, and enabled them to pass their days in the moderate conformity after which Baxter always sighed. But events of even greater importance were now engaging the attention of all thoughtful citizens. Far and wide broadsides containing the speeches of Falkland and Pym were printed and circulated. The agitation against ship-money had begun. No real attempt to revive the waning feelings of loyalty and reverence was made.

The Scottish army marched into England, and the great struggle between King and Commons was the only subject talked of in market-places and Church gatherings.

When every allowance has been made for the exaggeration of partisans, it must be admitted that if one-tenth part of the exposure made of the ignorance and folly of many of the clergy were true, there was enough to justify the invective of Prynne and even the vituperation, couched in miserable Latin, of Dr. Bastwick of Colchester.

It was at this time that the men of Kidderminster petitioned against their vicar, a certain Mr. Dance. He preached four times a year, and was said to be a drunkard. His curate was even worse than the vicar. He traded in illicit marriages, and was an open scoffer. The vicar compounded matters with his parishioners. He was willing to delegate most of his duties to a lecturer; and on the 9th of March, 1640, a document was signed inviting Baxter to fill the place. The church, a noble specimen of the later Gothic, was convenient. There was a promise of an ardent and faithful con-

gregation. To Kidderminster Baxter at once repaired, and after one sermon, or rather one preaching, he was unanimously elected. The various documents bearing upon this portion of his history are still carefully preserved, and can hardly be perused without emotion. There is hardly anything more touching than the expression of the desire of persons who have suffered neglect, for greater spiritual privileges. The town had been gradually growing in importance and had a trade of its own. But it had been left to the tender mercies of worthless men in an age of reviving zeal. Baxter felt for the place and the people all the attachment felt by those who commence the care of souls in earnest under special disadvantage. "Thus," says he, speaking of his call to the place, "I was brought, by the gracious providence of God, to that place which had the chiefest of my labours, and yielded me the greatest fruits of comfort; and I noted the mercy of God in this, that I never went to any place in my life, which I had before desired, or thought of, much less sought, till the sudden invitation did surprise me." Through all the various changes of his life his thoughts returned to the place where he had spent so many years. In his poetical fragments there are some lines which express fully the feelings of a pastor.

"But among all, none did so much abound
 With fruitful mercies, as that barren ground,
 Where I did make my best and longest stay,
 And bore the heat and burden of the day.

Mercies grew thicker there than summer flowers,
They over numbered my days and hours.
There was my dearest flock and special charge ;
Our hearts with mutual love Thou didst enlarge.
'Twas there Thy mercy did my labours bless
With the most great and wonderful success."

Baxter's first residence at Kidderminster lasted only about two years. Political agitation greatly hindered his work. His health was bad. Malignant slanders were circulated regarding his life. At one time it appears he was in actual danger. At the commencement of the Civil War the Royalist cause was popular with the mob. Baxter was advised to withdraw, and he went to Gloucester, where he remained for a month, and was a witness of the first public disputations between the ministry of the Church and sectaries, which were then becoming the occupation of many people in towns. On his return to Kidderminster he found that it was in vain to think of quiet pastoral work while the whole thoughts of the people were engaged in the struggle. The account given by Baxter of the battle of Edgehill contains some interesting particulars. "Upon the Lord's day, October 23rd, 1642, I preached at Alcester for my reverend friend, Mr. Samuel Clark. As I was preaching, the people heard the cannon play, and perceived that the armies were engaged. When the sermon was done, in the afternoon, the report was more audible, which made us all long to hear of the success. About sun-setting, many troops

fled through the town, and told us that all was lost on the Parliament side ; and that the carriages were taken, and the wagons plundered, before they came away. The townsmen sent a message to Stratford-on-Avon to know the truth. About four o'clock in the morning he returned and told us that Prince Rupert wholly routed the left wing of the Earl of Essex's army ; but while his men were plundering the wagons the main body and the right wing routed the rest of the king's army, took his standard, but lost it again ; killed General the Earl of Lindsay, and took his son prisoner ; that few persons of quality on the side of the Parliament were lost, and no noblemen, but Lord St. John, eldest son to the Earl of Bolingbroke ; that the loss of the left wing happened through the treachery of Sir Faithful Fortescue, major to Lord Fielding's regiment of horse, who turned to the king when he should have charged ; and that the victory was obtained principally by Colonel Hollis's regiment of London redcoats, and the Earl of Essex's own regiment and life guard, where Sir Philip Stapleton, Sir Arthur Haselrigge, and Colonel Urey did much. Next morning, being desirous to see the field, I went to Edgehill, and found the Earl of Essex, with the remaining part of his army, keeping the ground, and the King's army facing them upon the hill about a mile off. There were about a thousand dead bodies in the field between them ; and many I suppose were buried before. Neither of the armies moving towards each other, the King's army presently drew off towards Banbury and then

to Oxford. The Earl of Essex's went back to provide for the wounded, and refresh themselves at Warwick Castle, belonging to Lord Brook. For myself I knew not what course to take. To live at home, I was uneasy ; but especially now, when soldiers on one side or other would be frequently among us, and we must still be at the mercy of every furious beast that would make a prey of us. I had neither money nor friends. I knew not who would receive me in any place of safety, nor had I anything to satisfy them for my diet and entertainment. Hereupon I was persuaded by one that was with me to go to Coventry where an old acquaintance, Mr. Simon King, was minister ; so thither I went, with a purpose to stay there till one side or other had got the victory, and the war was ended ; for so wise in matters of war was I, and all the country beside, that we commonly supposed that a very few days or weeks, by one other battle, would end the wars. Here I stayed at Mr. King's a month ; but the war was then as far from being likely to end as before. While I was thinking what course to take in this necessity, the Committee and Governor of the city desired me to stay with them, and lodge in the Governor's house, and preach to the soldiers. The offer suited well with my necessities ; but I resolved that I would not be chaplain to a regiment, nor take a commission : yet, if the mere preaching of a sermon once or twice a week to the garrison would satisfy them, I would accept of the offer till I could go home again. Here, accordingly, I lived

in the Governor's house, followed my studies as quietly as in a time of peace, for about a year, preaching once a week to the soldiers, and once, on the Lord's day, to the people, taking nothing from either but my diet."

It is well known that Clarendon attempts to show that the result of the battle of Edgehill was not unfavourable to the King. Baxter held a different opinion; but his agreement with Clarendon's account is such as to give us a favourable idea of his desire for truth. Indeed, during the whole of his intricate details we have constant evidence of an anxiety for accuracy, though it must fairly be said he is never able to conceal his own bias. At this time he seems to have been in great want of money. Skirmishes were taking place continually in his old neighbourhood. His father was imprisoned; and when Baxter had obtained his release, he resolved to accept the invitation of the governor of Coventry, and act as chaplain to the soldiers there. In many respects his position was an unfortunate one. He thought it needful to engage in strife with Separatists, Anabaptists, and Antinomians; but even by his own account, his efforts after peace were far from successful. He remained during his second residence at Coventry for more than a year. It was a time of great trial. The fights of Newbury, the sieges of Gloucester, Plymouth, and Taunton, the great disaster of Marston Moor, succeeded each other rapidly. "Miserable and bloody days," he calls them, "in which he was the most honourable who could kill most of his enemies." The

men with whom he lived in Coventry were reformers, not revolutionists. They were still aiming after such changes only as would restore the balance between King and Parliament. Baxter looked upon the accounts given in the Court News-book as to the rise of Anabaptism in the army as much exaggerated, and it was not until his arrival at headquarters that he discovered how rapid the growth of sectarian factions had been. After the great victory of Naseby, he determined to find out for himself how things stood. He joined his friends at headquarters, and very soon made up his mind that he ought to undertake the duty of acting as chaplain to Whalley's regiment. Some time before he actually commenced his work as chaplain, he had received a pressing invitation from Cromwell to minister to the spiritual need of his great troop. Baxter's refusal to do so had evidently annoyed Cromwell, who received him when he actually joined the army with a cold welcome. The two men regarded each other with a profound distrust. It is hardly too much to say that the view of Cromwell's character, undoubtedly prevalent until the publication of Mr. Carlyle's great book, was owing chiefly to the perhaps exaggerated value attached to Baxter's representations. It has been said that Guizot, whose knowledge of the history of this time was certainly great, estimated very highly Baxter's account of the conduct of Cromwell during the period of his chaplaincy. Baxter evidently perceived that there were men who desired to induce Cromwell to adopt measures from

which he himself shrank ; and the portraits he has drawn of Harrison and some others, though slightly tinged with acerbity, are remarkable evidences of his knowledge of human character. When at Coventry he took the Covenant, but his repentance was bitter. In what he calls his "penitent confessions," we read the struggles of a man who felt himself hampered by the Covenant and the declaration for the Parliament which it involved. Had it been possible for Baxter to abstain entirely from political action, he would certainly have been free from the torments occasioned by his indulgence in casuistical scruples. He had no sympathy with the men who were gradually gathering all power into their own hands ; and with those who claimed perfect liberty of conscience he had a standing quarrel. It is never quite safe to differ from one who understands the complicated religious history of this time so well as Principal Tulloch ; but there is some reason to think that when he ascribes to Baxter a lack of charity in his judgments on parties and sects, he is somewhat hard. What strikes the impartial student of Baxter's memoirs, is his desire for impartiality. He was a real lover of the monarchical principle ; and although his views of Church government alter from time to time, he hated with a perfect hatred the excesses of the Vanists, Seekers, Ranters, and others, who raised their heads, struggling, like Mr. Carlyle's vipers in a pitcher, for predominance and power. It is interesting to note that he discusses in his catalogue of sects the Behmenists with a certain tenderness,

and declares that they seem to have attained to greater meekness and conquest of passion than any of the rest. His mention, however, of the follies of Dr. Pordage, is a proof that he could discriminate between the mystical fervour of some of these followers of Behmen, and the ridiculous legends which certainly go far to excuse those who can see nothing in Behmen's writings but incurable frenzy. Baxter did not escape from the almost universal belief of thoughtful Englishmen, that many of the excesses of the sects were at this time secretly encouraged by Jesuits. Whatever part the members of the Society of Jesus may have taken in the earlier troubles of the reign of Charles, it seems tolerably certain that they had little or nothing to do with the leaders of the popular party. In all Baxter's discussions on the religious discords, we find hardly any recognition of the point of liberty of conscience, as this is now understood. It is quite clear that if he had had his own way, a system of stern repression would have been adopted.

During the whole of his service with the army he suffered much from his constitutional maladies. At last, however, he was obliged to retire in order to enjoy a little quiet and rest. He fell ill at Worcester, and was sent to Tunbridge Wells. Once more he attempted to resume his duties, but he found that his frame could stand the exposure of campaigning life no more. He had found a warm friend in Sir Thomas Rous, of Rous-Lench, in Worcestershire. He was attacked by illness at Milbourne, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and Lady Rous sent her

servant to search for the preacher, who had already been for some time an inmate at Rous-Lench. He returned to his kind friends "in great weakness," he says, "thither I made shift to get, where I was entertained with the greatest care and tenderness, while I continued the use of means for my recovery; and when I had been there a quarter of a year, I returned to Kidderminster." His work in the army, however disappointing to himself, could hardly have been in vain. Contact with a man of real unselfishness always exercises some influence, even upon the roughest and most indifferent of men. Where purity of motive is evident, involuntary tributes of respect are sure to be rendered in some form or other. It was the peculiar happiness of Baxter, in all stages of his career, to extract even from opponents admiration for his self-denial and fervour. Many who were wearied to death by his endless diatribes against the dogmas of the sectaries, must have inwardly revered the man who had left quiet for strife, and who could not conceal his burning love for the souls of the rude and turbulent soldiery.

In the peaceful retirement of Rous-Lench, Baxter commenced to work with his pen. He was, as he tells us himself, "in continual expectation of death, with one foot in the grave," and yet he was able to write what certainly stands out as the highest and best of all his works, the first part of "The Saint's Everlasting Rest." The terrible experience of the last two years exercised a most invigorating influence upon his thoughts. He looked back upon the struggles and disputes with a

lofty, chastened temper. Undoubtedly this noble meditation owes much to the fact that at Rous-Lench he was away from his books, and not tempted to indulge in the prolix digressions which disfigure many of his other writings. At no time did he attain so pure and eloquent a style. To tell the truth, his style is most unequal. In the midst of tedious controversial arguments, he will sometimes surprise his reader by short and terse passages which will often tempt us to exclaim, "*O si sic omnia!*" In the first part of "The Saint's Rest," he seems to move freely. Principal Tulloch's words must be admitted to express admirably the result of thoughtful consideration on this remarkable book:—"The second part of 'The Saint's Rest' shows the comparative disadvantage of scholastic leisure, and his habitual turn for polemical discursiveness. It is tedious and out of place. It might be omitted, and the work improved. But as it is there is a touching harmony of tone in 'The Saint's Rest.' There are few with any solemn feeling of religion who can read it unmoved; the fervour and passion of its heavenly feeling, blending with the scenes of glory which it depicts, the pathos of its appeals, the ardour of its description, the enraptured sweetness of some of its pictures, the affection, force, and hurry of its eloquence, when he gives free rein to his spiritual impulses, and brushes unheeding and headlong past the tangled brakes of logic that lie in wait for him—all render it one of the most impressive treatises which have descended to us from the seventeenth century. Much of its impressive-

ness flows from the intensity of the Puritan feeling which it everywhere reflects, and the vivid realization of the unseen, in which this feeling lived and moved. The colouring of its heaven is steeped in the intense hues of the religious imagination of the time—Brook, Hampden, and Pym were among the saints whom he rejoiced he should meet above. The definitions, the arguments, many of the descriptions, are Puritan; yet the highest charm of the treatise is the fulness with which it reflects the catholic ideas of the eternal rest—the love, life, and fervour of tender-hearted and universal piety that it breathes.” Other characteristics of “The Saint’s Rest” have been well touched upon by Archbishop Trench in the first volume of “St. James’s Lectures.”

“A great admirer of Baxter has recently suggested a doubt whether he ever recast a sentence, or bestowed a thought on its rhythm and the balance of its several parts; statements of his own make it tolerably certain he did not. As a consequence he has none of those *bravura* passages which must have cost Jeremy Taylor in his ‘Holy Living and Dying,’ and elsewhere, so much of thought and pain, for such do not come of themselves, and unbidden, to the most accomplished masters of language. But for all this there reigns in Baxter’s writings, and not least in ‘The Saint’s Rest,’ a robust and masculine eloquence; nor do these want from time to time rare and unsought felicities of language, which once heard can scarcely be forgotten. In regard, indeed, of the choice of words, the book might have

been written yesterday. There is hardly one which has become obsolete, hardly one which has drifted away from the meaning which it has in his writings. This may not be a great matter; but it argues a rare insight, conscious or unconscious, into all which was truest, into all which was farthest removed from affectation and untruthfulness in the language, that after more than two hundred years so it should be; and we may recognise here an element, not to be overlooked, of the abiding popularity of the book. Having tarried thus long as in the outer court of the temple, let me now draw nearer to the heart of things. And first I will attempt to realize to myself and to you the conditions, outward and inward, under which this book was produced, the forces which contributed to its production; for these will have gone far to make it what it is. I remarked at the outset that the book was one of those which seem rather to write themselves than to be written. Let this, however, be as it may, so much at least stands fast, that it was originally composed for his own use,—surely an invaluable condition for a book of practical divinity, that it should have been written to instruct, to comfort, to strengthen him from whom it came, and then, if it might be, others.

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“But the author of ‘The Saint’s Rest’ aims at something more than the disenchanting us from the love of this world, and from the minding of earthly things. This is but half, and the easiest half, of the task which

he has set before him. 'To despise earth,' he has somewhere said, 'is easy to me; but not so easy to be acquainted and conversant in heaven.' This, as its name sufficiently declares, is the motive and final cause of the book—to assist and set forward, in himself first, and then in others, this acquaintance with heaven, this conversation in heaven; to kindle—by meditation on heavenly things, above all of the heavenly rest—the cold affection towards these which he mourned in himself, which he saw too plainly in others; which who is there among us that does not feel in himself? And here is indeed an explanation of the immense importance which he attached to meditation, of the prominence which he gave to it as a help, nay, almost as an exercise, absolutely necessary for the strengthening and deepening of the spiritual life of the soul, with the most careful directions when and where and how this may be most profitably exercised, which he gives. Many, if I mistake not, are wont to regard this exercise of meditation with coldness and distrust, as a device for the promotion of a certain artificial piety, and a transient excitement of the religious affections, much extolled and much practised in the Roman Catholic Church; and recently, with other questionable helps to devotion, borrowed from it by a few among ourselves. There cannot, however, be a greater mistake than this. It needs but a very slight acquaintance with the best Puritan divinity of the seventeenth century, with such books as Gurnall's 'Christian Armour,' with Bates' treatise on this very matter, above

all with the writings of Baxter, and this one first of all, to dissipate any such notion. The fourth and concluding portion of 'The Saint's Rest,' nearly three hundred pages, and constituting almost an independent work—for it has its own title-page, its own preface, its own dedication—is devoted exclusively to the urging of this duty, which he describes as 'the delightfulest task to the spirit, and the most tedious to the flesh, that ever men on earth were employed in.' I must needs consider it the most precious portion of the whole book; indeed, he himself announces that all which went before was but as a leading up to this. But he shall himself describe this section of his work: 'A directory,' he calls it, 'for the getting and keeping of the heart in heaven by the diligent practice of that excellent unknown duty of heavenly meditation, being the main thing intended by the author in the writing of this book, and to which all the rest is but subservient.' And on meditation, not merely as a help to the heavenly life, but as one which none may lawfully forego, he often expresses himself very strongly, as thus:—"That meditation is a duty of God's ordering, I never met with a man that would deny. It is in word confessed to be a duty by all, but by the constant neglect denied by most."

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"There are passages, not a few, toward the end of the book, strains of the most passionate devotion, in which he seeks to initiate such as have yielded themselves to his guidance into the deeper mysteries of Divine medita-

tion, to furnish them with some of the materials on which the soul may work, to lead them upward and onward, step by step, from strength to strength, from glory to glory, to the contemplation of the glory of God. Take, for example, this. He has spoken of some motives to love, and proceeds:—‘But if thou feelest not thy love to work, lead thy heart further, and show it yet more. Show it the King of saints on the throne of His glory, who is the first and last, who liveth and was dead. Draw near and behold Him. Dost thou not hear His voice? He that called Thomas to come near and see the prints of the nails, and to put his fingers into His wounds, He it is that calls to thee. Come near, and be not faithless but believing. Look well upon Him. Dost thou not know Him? Why, it is He that brought thee up from the pit of hell, and purchased the advancement which thou must inherit for ever. And yet dost thou not know Him? Why, His hands were pierced, His head was pierced, His side was pierced, His heart was pierced with the sting of thy sins, that by these marks thou mightest always know Him. Hast thou forgotten since He wounded Himself to cure thy wounds, and let out His own blood to stop thy bleeding? If thou know Him not by the face, the voice, the hands; if thou know Him not by the tears and bloody sweat; yet look nearer, thou mayest know Him by the heart. Hast thou forgotten the time when thou wast weeping, and He wiped the tears from thine eyes? when thou wast bleeding, and He wiped the blood from thy soul? when pricking cares

and fears did grieve thee, and He did refresh thee and draw out the thorns? Hast thou forgotten when thy folly did wound thy soul, and the venomous guilt did seize upon thy heart; when He sucked forth the mortal poison from thy soul, though therewith He drew it into His own? Oh, how often hath He found thee sitting like Hagar, while thou gavest up thy state, thy friends, thy life, yea, thy soul for lost, and He opened to thee a well of consolation, and opened thine eyes also, that thou mightest see it. How oft hath He found thee in the posture of Elias, sitting down under the tree forlorn and solitary, and desiring rather to die than to live; and He hath spread thee a table of relief from heaven, and sent thee away refreshed and encouraged to His work. How oft hath He found thee in such a passion as Jonas, in thy peevish frenzy a-weary of thy life; and He hath not answered passion with passion, though He might indeed have done well to be angry, but hath mildly reasoned thee out of thy madness, and said, "Dost thou well to be angry, and to repine against Me?" How often hath He set thee on watching and praying and repenting and believing, and when He hath returned hath found thee fast asleep; and yet He hath not taken thee at the worst, but instead of an angry aggravation of thy fault, He hath covered it over with the mantle of love, and prevented thy overmuch sorrow with a gentle excuse, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." How oft hath He been traduced in His cause or name, and thou hast (like Peter) denied Him, at least by thy

silence, while He hath stood in sight; yet all the revenge He hath taken hath been a heart-melting look, and a silent remembering thee of thy fault by His countenance.'

“And hear him once, and only once more, as he rebukes with the same passionate earnestness those who, loving God, do not love Him better; who, professing to seek, and in a sense seeking, a heavenly country, are yet unwilling to reach it, and to find themselves (all life's tempest past) in the Fair Havens of the eternal rest. 'Ah, foolish, wretched soul, doth every prisoner groan for freedom? and every slave desire his jubilee? and every sick man long for health? and every hungry man for food? And dost thou alone abhor deliverance? Doth the seaman long to see the land? Doth the husbandman desire the harvest? and the traveller long to be at home? and the soldier long to win the field? And art thou loth to see thy labours finished, and to receive the end of thy faith, and to obtain the things for which thou livest? Are all thy sufferings only seeming? have thy griefs and groans been only dreams? If they were, yet methinks we should not be afraid of waking; fearful dreams are not delightful. Or is it not rather the world's delights that are all mere dreams and shadows? Is not all its glory as the light of a glow-worm, a wandering fire, yielding but small directing light, and as little comforting heat, in all our doubtful and sorrowful darkness? Or hath the world in these its latter days laid aside its ancient enmity? Is it become of late more kind?

Who hath wrought this great change, and who hath made his reconciliation? Surely not the great Reconciler. He hath told us in the world we shall have trouble, and in Him only we shall have peace. We may reconcile ourselves to the world (at our peril), but it will never reconcile itself to us. Oh, foolish, unworthy soul, who hadst rather dwell in this land of darkness than be at rest with Christ; who hadst rather stay among the wolves, and daily suffer the scorpion's stings, than to praise the Lord with the host of heaven! If thou didst well know what heaven is, and what earth is, it would not be so.'"

The first edition was published in 1649. It is said that for many years "The Saint's Rest," the "Pilgrim's Progress," and Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," were the most popular religious books in England. In the editions published since 1659 the names of Brook, Hampden, and Pym are omitted, in deference to the licenser of books. Baxter has been blamed for this omission; but the charge is hardly fair. His own later judgment would probably have been against the introduction of anything like doubtful matter. His admiration of the men of whom so much has since been written continued probably unchanged. The inferiority of the second portion of the book has perhaps injured its reputation in more recent days. But if it be true that the "Imitation of Christ," the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the "Christian Year," find a ready sale in all places where English emigrants are found to congregate, it may be

assumed that the more devout will have added to these volumes the book which has been the solace of so many weary hearts, and which has made the name of Baxter dear to readers who knew little of the remarkable life of its author.

After his retirement at Rous-Lench we find him once more installed at Kidderminster. The people invited him to take the vicarage, but he declined ; and with that contempt for money which he always manifested, he merely resumed his old position, receiving £80 or £90 a year and a few rooms "at the top of another man's house."

The vicar and his curate were pensioned, and in this way Baxter avoided any accusations which might have been brought against him. In spite of his feeble health, he manfully resumed the pastoral labours which have made him even more famous than his voluminous writings.

CHAPTER III.

THE WORK AT KIDDERMINSTER.

KIDDERMINSTER, like all towns during the great struggle, was no pleasant place to reside in when Baxter commenced his memorable pastorate. The ignorance and immorality on which Baxter remarked forcibly, had increased terribly. Many persons, unconnected with the trade of the place, had settled in the town, and from the licentiousness of this mixed multitude many troubles arose. In all pastoral work, the one thing needful is that the servant of Christ should throw himself entirely into the task set before him. In England there had been not a few men, who, like George Herbert, in small and quiet places made the life of a country pastor delightful and memorable.

It would be a mistake to suppose that all the religious zeal was to be found amongst the Puritans. But as far as we know, no one had ever yet devoted himself in a perfect spirit of self-surrender to the work of the ministry in towns. Laud himself frequently complained of the neglect of their charge on the part of the clergy in London. There are very few pictures of pastoral work in any age of the Church's history so artless and

buoyant as the touching records given by Baxter of his ministry at Kidderminster. It is wonderful, indeed, that he should have been able to struggle successfully against the attacks of bodily weakness to which he was continually subject. His maladies, and the extraordinary remedies he adopted, must provoke the smiles of the readers of his autobiography. He was in no way in advance of his age, and seems to have been at the mercy of every vendor of quack medicines. But a man who writes of himself that he was seldom an hour free from pain, may well be excused if he dwells somewhat tediously on his troubles and deliverances. During the first part of his stay at Kidderminster, he was in the habit of prescribing for the maladies of the people. His studies were grievously hindered, and the fear of advising wrongly made his life a burden to him. In a happy hour he induced a diligent physician to settle in the town, and from that time, except in case of necessity, he practised no more. After the war it was Baxter's habit to preach only once on Sunday. On Thursdays he lectured, and on the evening of that day anxious inquirers met at his house. One of them repeated what he could remember of the sermon. Doubts were talked over, and the pastor, according to his ability, resolved them. Days of humiliation were held occasionally. Baxter and his assistant visited fourteen families weekly. There was private catechizing and conference. It was the duty of the assistant to bring the people to the pastor. Sometimes persons of all ages were catechized in church, and

expostulation with individuals seemed to be constant. He did not neglect the meetings of ministers. His reputation often secured to him the office of moderator, and there are most interesting contemporary notices in the records of some Worcestershire parishes, which give distinct evidence of the esteem in which he was held by his brethren. During the whole period of Cromwell's sway, Baxter looked upon himself as comparatively silenced, and he dwells with exultation on the exemption he enjoyed from positive persecution. His ministry was successful. We must give the result of his earnest labour in his own words :—

“ My public preaching met with an attentive, diligent auditory. Having broke over the brunt of the opposition of the rabble before the wars, I found them afterwards tractable and unprejudiced. Before I entered into the ministry, God blessed my private conference to the conversion of some, who remain firm and eminent in holiness to this day ; but then, and in the beginning of my ministry, I was wont to number them as jewels ; but since then I could not keep any number of them. The congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five galleries after my coming thither ; the church itself being very capacious, and the most commodious and convenient that ever I was in. Our private meetings, also, were full. On the Lord's day there was no disorder to be seen in the streets ; but you might have heard a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons, as you passed through them.

“In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God, and called on His name, and when I came away, there was some streets where there was not one poor family in the side that did not do so; and that did not, by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And in those families which were the worst, being inns and alehouses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious. Though our administration of the Lord’s Supper was so ordered as displeased many, and the far greater part kept away, we had six hundred that were communicants; of whom there were not twelve that I had not good hopes of as to their sincerity; those few who consented to our communion, and yet lived scandalously, were excommunicated afterwards. I hope there were also many who had the fear of God, and that came not to our communion in the sacrament, some of them being kept off by husbands, by parents, by masters, and some dissuaded by men that differed from us. Those many that kept away yet took it patiently, and did not revile us as doing them wrong; and those unruly young men who were excommunicated, bore it patiently as to their outward behaviour, though their hearts were full of bitterness.

“When I set upon personal conference with each family, and catechizing them, there were very few families in all the town that refused to come; and these few were beggars at the town’s ends, who were so ignorant that they were ashamed that it should be manifest. Few

families went from me without some tears or seemingly serious promises for a godly life. Yet many ignorant and ungodly persons there were still among us; but most of them were in the parish, and not in the town, and in those parts of the parish which were farthest from the town. And whereas one part of the parish was impropriate, and paid tithes to laymen, and the other part maintained the church, a brook dividing them, it fell out that almost all that side of the parish which paid tithes to the church were godly, honest people, and did it willingly, without contestation, and most of the bad people of the parish lived on the other side.

“Some of the poor men did competently understand the body of divinity, and were able to judge in difficult controversies. Some of them were so able in prayer, that very few ministers did match them in order and fulness and apt expressions and holy oratory, with fervency. Abundance of them were able to pray very laudably with their families, or with others. The temper of their minds and the innocency of their lives were much more laudable than their parts. The professors of serious godliness were generally of very humble minds and carriage, of meek and quiet behaviour unto others, and of blamelessness and innocency in their conversation. God was pleased also to give me abundant encouragement in the lectures I preached about in other places; as at Worcester, Cleobury, etc., but especially at Dudley and Sheffnall. At the former of which, being the first place that ever I preached in, the poor nailers and other

labourers would not only crowd the church as full as ever I saw any in London, but also hang upon the windows and the leads without."

In a passage of delightful temper, this true pastor paid a noble tribute to his two admirable assistants. Like a great teacher in the University of Oxford who dedicated a work to those from whom he learned much while he seemed to be teaching, Baxter spoke of Mr. Sergeant and his successor, Humphrey Weldern, as men who had led him on with untiring diligence to difficult labours. Among the laymen of the parish were men who aided him in every way. He believed, too, that he had an advantage in the occupation of the weavers, who "as they stand in their loom, they can set a task before them, or edify one another." He circulated freely some of the plainer of his practical writings. "To every family that was poor," he says, "and had not a Bible, I gave a Bible." The proceeds of his writings he dispensed in alms. Some of his richer friends enabled him to send promising pupils from the school to the universities. He seems to have carefully abstained from all pecuniary entanglements with his people. He never, however, refrained from attacking the political principles of those he considered real enemies to religion. Chrysostom himself, in the days of his complete sway, was not more fearless than Baxter in his bold invective against vice and error. Indeed, in reading the simple account of the maintenance of discipline at Kidderminster during the greater part of Baxter's pastorate, we

seem almost transported to the times when Church censure was a reality, and when an emperor quailed before the menace of an Ambrose or a Hildebrand. Personal veneration for a man of blameless character and high aim often reconciles men to the endurance even of public shame. Even Baxter's opponents, who took an entirely different view of doctrine and practice, were foremost in expressing their high value of the purity of his life. Sir Ralph Clare, the stout cavalier, who felt bound to oppose Baxter's wishes after the Restoration, asked him to accept a purse of money, which it is needless to say Baxter refused. It is certainly a remarkable proof of the reality of Baxter's teaching, that six hundred persons were in the habit of attending the holy communion. This missionary zeal for the souls of his people was infectious. He says of the godly people of the place, "they thirsted after the salvation of their neighbours and were in private my assistants, and being dispersed through the town, were ready in almost all companies to repress seducing words, and to justify godliness, convince, reprove, and exhort men, according to their needs ; as also to teach them how to pray, and to help them to sanctify the Lord's day."

Any estimate formed of Baxter's ministry would be imperfect if his conscientious care to respect the scruples of others were unmentioned. To those who preferred the kneeling posture at the celebration of holy communion, he administered the sacrament after their own fashion. He was rigid, with regard to baptism, and required an

acknowledgment of sin in the case of offenders. His kind treatment, however, disarmed hostility, and many hardened persons were brought by his gentle persuasion to a better mind. The zeal and ardour with which many men advocate some peculiar opinion, Baxter evidently carried into his ordinary exhortation to observe the moral law and to retain "unity with the Church Catholic, love to men, and the hope of life eternal." He dwells especially on the advantage he derived from the care bestowed on his affairs by the faithful housekeeper who managed his household for fourteen years, "so that I never had one hour's trouble about it." In "The Reformed Pastor" he lays down the lines of his simple method. It is characteristic of the man, that when he mentions in his reminiscences the thirty advantages which contributed to his success, all that he says of any merely personal gift is an allusion to his "familiar moving voice," and "his dealing in fundamentals."

Most of his practical works were probably originally preached, in some form or other. The sermons of Wesley and Whitefield are dull reading, and often lead readers to wonder at the extraordinary effect produced by their oratory. There is not much to attract in the sermons of Baxter, but we know that he never failed in arresting attention, and there are some records of the influence produced by individual sermons sufficient to indicate that the sermon was the man. It was an age when men enjoyed prolixity. There was some-

thing attractive in divisions and sub-divisions to men who were in real earnest about the influence of particular tenets ; and it has been well remarked that the very digressions, so tedious to modern readers, were a help and not a hindrance to those whose only source of culture was the Bible and the truths drawn from it. Yet, scattered throughout the formal treatises of Baxter are to be found passages of intense energy and rapid vigour. No man can sustain the pace of such movement always. We can, however, form some idea of the delight imparted to devout souls by the delivery of truths which were felt to have mastered the whole being of the preacher, often bowed down by physical suffering, and yet able to convince all that he desired nothing more than their spiritual health. It is indeed a beautiful picture of a faithful ministry which may be gathered from the scattered notices and simple outpourings of Baxter's memoirs.

To most men the practical labour of the ministry would have been too engrossing to permit of active theological writing. But it was during his fourteen years at Kidderminster that he produced many of his most important contributions to theology. His treatise against infidelity was called forth by the writings of Clement Writer, of Worcester, a professed Seeker. It has no particular interest for modern readers. In "Christian Concord and Universal Concord" he gives vent to the desire for universal unity which was the passion of his life. In controversy with Dr. Owen upon

this subject, Baxter does not shine. The great schoolman Puritan surpassed him in restraint and temper. "Disputations on Sacramental Doctrine and Church Government" made little or no mark on the theological discussions of the time. Eclecticism in theology seldom attracts any but the thoughtful few. In Baxter's day parties and sects were strongly marked and fiercely divided. The peacemaker, who desired to do what S. T. Coleridge and F. D. Maurice aimed at in their attempts, to show how portions of truth had been appropriated by minds differing widely, had no place of honour in the seventeenth century. A passage from Baxter's sermon on "Making light of Christ and Salvation," throws an interesting light on his practical teaching:—

"Dearly beloved in the Lord, I have now done that work which I came upon; what effect it hath or will have upon your hearts, I know not, nor is it any further in my power to accomplish that which my soul desireth for you. Were it the Lord's will that I might have my wish herein, the words that you have this day heard should so stick by you that the secure should be awakened by them, and none of you should perish by the slighting of your salvation. I cannot now follow you to your several habitations to apply this word to your particular necessities; but oh that I could make every man's conscience a preacher to himself, that it might do it, which is ever with you: that the next time you go prayerless to bed, or about your business, conscience might cry out, 'Dost thou set no more by Christ and

thy salvation?' That the next time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy and diligent life (I will not say to deride it, as more ado than needs), conscience might cry out to thee, 'Dost thou set so light by Christ and thy salvation?' That the next time you are ready to rush upon known sin, and to please your fleshly desires against the command of God, conscience might cry out, 'Is Christ and salvation no more worth than to cast them away, or venture them for thy lusts?' That when you are following the world with your most eager desires, forgetting the world to come, and the change that is a little before you, conscience might cry out to you, 'Is Christ and salvation no more worth than so?' That when you are next spending the Lord's day in idleness or vain sports, conscience might tell you what you are doing. In a word, that in all your neglects of duty, your sticking at the supposed labour or cost of a godly life, yea, in all your cold and lazy prayers and performances, conscience might tell you how unsuitable such endeavours are to the reward; and that Christ and salvation should not be so slighted. I will say no more but this at this time, It is a thousand pities that when God hath provided a Saviour for the world, and when Christ hath suffered so much for their sins, and made so full a satisfaction to justice, and purchased so glorious a kingdom for His saints, and all this is offered so freely to sinners, to lost, unworthy sinners, even for nothing, that yet so many millions should everlastingly perish because they made light of their Saviour and salvation, and prefer the vain world and their lusts before them.

I have delivered my message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it. I have persuaded you with the word of truth and soberness; the Lord persuade you more effectually, or else all this is lost. Amen."

It ought not to be forgotten, that even in the busiest of his days, Baxter had many yearning and tender thoughts about the conversion of the heathen. He was indeed in many respects before his age. Readers familiar with Butler's closely argued "Analogy," will often be startled to find how Baxter, in an occasional sentence, has almost anticipated some of the more striking positions of the great bishop. In the same way, we seem to be living in the time of Simeon or Selwyn, when we read Baxter's correspondence with Eliot, the apostle of the Indians in America. He dwells on the industry of the Jesuits and friars, and their successes, which "do shame us all save you," in one of his letters. Had he gone himself on a career like Eliot's, he would have rivalled Francis Xavier in missionary zeal, as he rivalled Oberlin in pastoral activity. Happily, and on the whole peacefully, the long period of his ministry at Kidderminster passed away. England, under the strong rule of Cromwell, was beginning to be a true power in European politics. Those who, like Baxter, had received the assumption of power with distrust, were beginning to feel the benefit of peace, and to desist at least from open opposition. But suddenly the Protector ended his strange career. The accession and resignation of Richard Cromwell still found Baxter pursuing his labour of love.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESTORATION.

FEW characters in history are so entitled to sympathy as Richard Cromwell. Baxter described the feeling of many regarding this single-hearted man. Those who considered the father "no better than a traitorous hypocrite, did begin to think they owed him subjection; which I confess was the case with myself." Had there been no military party in England, it is probable that a great number at least would have acquiesced in the advent to power of one who had an evident desire to return to the ancient forms of constitutional government. The very virtues of Richard Cromwell stood in his way. Fleetwood and Lambert, with others of inferior note, saw their opportunity. Vane and his enthusiast followers were still dreaming of a republican Utopia. Owen and the Independents were in no mood to resign their empire. The mild nature of Richard Cromwell shrank from violent measures. He was glad to retire into obscurity, and leave the factions to their work of disturbance.

It was not until Monk had occupied London that Baxter left his pastoral labours. In times of great

popular excitement, men of his temper naturally desire to be within reach of the centre of influence. He had an interview with the general in order to prevail upon him to restrain the excesses of popular feeling. He was accused of having attempted to induce Monk to refrain from effort to restore the kingdom. It hardly needed his own positive denial to contradict a statement so entirely contrary to his well-known zeal for royalty. People are often credulous where their wishes are interested; and it is certainly strange to see how easily Baxter was imposed upon by the letters put into circulation as to Charles's attachment to Protestant principles. The Presbyterian party strove heartily to prove that the Restoration was owing to their means. According to Calamy, Sir Ralph Clare had informed Baxter that in the event of restoration terms of compromise might be arranged. It is even said that some correspondence took place between Baxter and Dr. Hammond upon the terms of union. This scheme of comprehension met with the usual fate of such attempts. From Breda, on the 4th April, 1660, came the famous declaration of liberty to tender consciences. Baxter's friends had still some misgivings. The Convention Parliament, which had sent for the King, named a day for fasting and prayer. Baxter, Calamy, and Dr. Gauden were selected to preach and pray at St. Margaret's, Westminster. There were many Cavaliers in the parliament, but the majority, it is supposed, were favourable to Presbyterian views. Baxter still hankered after re-

conciliation, and in his sermon told his hearers of the remarkable harmony between his own views and those of Usher, a harmony which had been established in half an hour's talk.

The enthusiasm of the nation swept all difficulties aside. The attachment to monarchy was far stronger than Cromwell and his friends had ever believed. It is difficult to understand how men like Baxter could be misled by the pompous professions of men who merely used them for their own ends. There can, however, be no mistake as to the complete purity of Baxter's motives. He was simply intent on the promotion of what he believed favourable to spiritual religion. But it is impossible to help wishing that he had had no part to play in semi-political struggles. Most of the Presbyterian leaders indulged the fond hope that some adaptation of the ancient system would include them within the pale of an established Church. It is needless to narrate the gradual extinction of these hopes. Baxter, it must be said, was somewhat unfair to Clarendon, who, had he had his own will, would probably have tried hard to consider fairly the proposals in favour of Usher's scheme of 1641.

It is difficult to refrain from wishing that greater concessions had been made on both sides, when the important meeting at Sion College between the leading Presbyterians and Churchmen took place. Wise heads on both sides saw that reconciliation was not wholly impossible. The memory of the sufferings of the clergy

was too strong in the minds of the Churchmen to permit of any real departure from what they deemed almost essential. Different ideas as to the conduct of worship lay, however, at the bottom of the discrepancy of views. The majestic Collects and moving Communion Office had no hold on the Puritan mind. They were endeared to their opponents by long use and the sanctity acquired in times of trouble.

To some students of this portion of our ecclesiastical annals, it seems that there was no real desire to meet Baxter and his friends half way. Yet there must have been men who could appreciate the spirit of the author of "The Saint's Rest." A bishopric was offered to Baxter. Reynolds and Calamy had discussed the question as to the consistency of accepting such an offer. Reynolds in the end was the only one who saw his way to a mitre. There are very few letters in the language more touching than that in which Baxter declines to Clarendon the offer of a bishopric. He had waited until the declaration as to liberty of conscience was finally settled, and finding that many things were to be granted which he desired, he was willing that his friends should accept the office which he declined on the ground of personal insufficiency.

"For my own part, I hope, by letters this very week, to disperse the seeds of satisfaction into many counties of England. My conscience commanding me to make this very work and business, until the things granted should be reversed, which God forbid. I must profess

to your lordship that I am utterly against accepting of a bishoprick, because I am conscious that it will overmatch my sufficiency, and affright me with the thought of my account for so great an undertaking. Especially because it will very much disable me from an effectual promoting of the Church's peace. As men will question all my argumentations and persuasions when they see me in the dignity which I plead for, but will take me to speak my conscience impartially when I am but as one of themselves ; so I must profess to your lordship that it will stop my own mouth, that I cannot for shame speak half so freely as now I can and will, if God enable me, for obedience and peace ; while I know that the hearers will be thinking I am pleading for myself. I therefore humbly crave, that your lordship will put some able man of our persuasion into the place which you intend for me, that I now think that Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Calamy may better accept of a bishoprick than I, which I hope your lordship will promote. I shall presume to offer some choice to your consideration : Dr. Francis Roberts, of Wrington, in Somersetshire, known by his works ; Mr. Froyzall, of Clun, in Shropshire and Hereford diocese, a man of great worth and good interest ; Mr. Daniel Cawdrey, of Billing, in Northamptonshire ; Mr. Anthony Burgess, of Sutton Coldfield, in Warwickshire—all known by their printed works ; Mr. John Trap, of Gloucestershire ; Mr. Ford, of Exeter ; Mr. Hughes, of Plymouth ; Mr. Bampfield, of Sherborne ; Mr. Woodbridge, of Newbury ; Dr.

Chambers, Dr. Bryan, and Dr. Grew, all of Coventry ; Mr. Brinsley, of Yarmouth ; Mr. Porter, of Whitchurch, in Shropshire ; Mr. Gilpin, of Cumberland ; Mr. Bowles, of York ; Dr. Temple, of Brompton, in Warwickshire. I need name no more.

“Secondly : That you will believe I as thankfully acknowledge your lordship’s favour as if I were by it possessed of a bishoprick ; and if your lordship continue in those intentions, I shall thankfully accept it in any other state or relation that may further my service in the Church and to His Majesty. But I desire, for the fore-mentioned reasons, that it may be no cathedral relation. And whereas the vicar of the parish where I have lived will not resign, but accept me only as his curate, if your lordship would procure him some prebendary, or other place of competent profit, for I dare not mention him to any pastoral charge, or place that requireth preaching, that so he might resign that vicarage to me, without his loss, according to the late Act before December ; for the sake of that town of Kidderminster, I should take it as a very great favour. But if there be any great inconvenience or difficulties in the way, I can well be content to be his curate. I crave your lordship’s pardon for this trouble which your own condescension has drawn upon you, and remain, etc.”

Dr. Reynolds, without consultation with Baxter and Calamy, after making clear to the king that he did not take the Laudian view of the episcopate, accepted the offer of a see. He preserved a character for moderation

and good sense, and was widely mourned in his diocese when he died at Norwich, in 1676. Calamy seems to have longed for the office of a bishop, but after much hesitation he declined. Manton and Bates were offered deaneries, but were unable to accept them. The decision of Baxter gained for him the Royal approbation. The king in his declaration had intimated that the Liturgy should be revised. Baxter urged on the Chancellor the fulfilment of this promise, and after some deliberation the Savoy Conference was held. Had the Conference taken place at once, there seems reason to believe that moderate counsels might have prevailed. With a new Parliament, however, the prospects of Churchmen grew brighter. As has so often happened, the zeal of the main body of Churchmen outran that of the leaders. Some at least of the bishops were already committed to changes and alterations, but when the first meeting of the Conference took place, it must have been evident to thoughtful men how it would end. The Bishop of London insisted that what Baxter and his friends desired should at once be made known. He and his brethren, he said, had no proposals to make. The policy was ingenious; and Baxter agreed to bring all the exceptions taken at one time, and all the additions at another. Baxter undertook to frame a new Liturgy, and this amazing resolution was really fatal to all progress. In the course of a fortnight his task was done, and the step, which all lovers of his memory must regret, cost him dear.

There is little to be said about the Liturgy itself. It shows at once the weakness and strength of Baxter's character. A weapon of the most formidable nature was handed over to those who desired no change. It is very probable that few of the bishops ever read "the fair copy of our reformed Liturgy," as Baxter called it. The study of liturgies has in modern days been almost dignified into a science. The terse and yet exquisite forms recovered by the diligence of explorers, bear faint resemblance to the prayers and ejaculations to be found in Baxter's work. But there is still much to interest a student in the attempt, not always unsuccessful, to subdue the rigour of dogma and to frame forms of words intended to be used by persons who, though differing in many ways, agreed to worship together on the basis of the truth of the creed of Christendom. The Conference degenerated into a mere intellectual disputation. Baxter, with his keen instinct for logical strife, took a prominent part and gained some distinction. The cause of the bishops was maintained by Gunning, an able and somewhat vehement admirer of the views of Laud. The members of the new Convocation, summoned about this time, threw their influence on the side of those who desired no concession. In Baxter's account of the final struggle, there is an earnest desire to be fair to the bishops; but a tone of disappointment, natural enough under the circumstances, is perceptible. The question of ordination engaged much of the attention of the few disputants who lingered to the close of the Conference.

There is little to object to in Burnet's account of the final disputation. "The two men that had the chief management of the debate were the most unfit to heal matters, and the fittest to widen them, that could have been found out. Baxter was the opponent, and Gunning was the respondent, who was afterwards advanced first to Chichester, and then to Ely. He was a man of great reading, and noted for a special subtlety of arguing. All the arts of sophistry were made use of by him on all occasions, in as confident a manner as if they had been sound reasoning. Baxter and he spent some days in much logical arguing, to the diversion of the town, who thought here were a couple of fencers engaged in disputes that could never be brought to an end, or have any good effect."

When the Conference was at an end, Baxter drew up a paper containing an account of what had been done. It was laid before the king, with the expression of a hope that the declaration in favour of tolerance would be carried out. The Chancellor gave encouragement to these expectations. Attempts have been made to throw discredit on the honesty of Clarendon's intentions. There is no real reason, however, to doubt his sincerity. A wayward spirit had gained possession of the clergy. Sheldon, the master spirit, was unyielding. Many also who were somewhat indifferent to the whole question, believed that the Presbyterians were impracticable. It must be said, also, that there was little opportunity for the more attractive parts of Baxter's character to show

themselves at this time. He soon, however, turned away from the disputes of London, and endeavoured to regain his old position at Kidderminster, desiring nothing more than to resume his pastoral labours. The incompetent vicar, now re-instated, was willing to submit to any terms. It would have been a scandal to bestow on him a prebend, but circumstances retained him in his vicarage. There is a touch of irony in Baxter's account of the negotiation:—

“Sir Ralph Clare and Sir John Packington,” says Baxter, “who were very great with Dr. Morley, newly made Bishop of Worcester, had made him believe that my interest was so great, and I could do so much with ministers and people in that county, that unless I would bind myself to promote their cause and party, I was not fit to be there. And this bishop being greatest of any man with the Lord Chancellor, must obstruct my return to my ancient flock. At last Sir Ralph Clare did freely tell me, that if I would conform to the orders and ceremonies of the Church, preach conformity to the people, and labour to set them right, there was no man in England so fit to be there, for no man could more effectually do it; but if I would not, there was no man so unfit for the place, for no man could more hinder it. I desired it as the greatest favour of them, that if they intended not my being there they would plainly tell me so, that I might trouble them and myself no more about it; but that was a favour too great to be expected. I had continual encouragement by promises, till I was

almost tired in waiting on them. At last, meeting Sir Ralph Clare in the bishop's chamber, I desired him, before the bishop, to tell me to my face if he had anything against me which might cause all this ado. He told me that I would give the sacrament to none kneeling, and that of eighteen hundred communicants, there were not past six hundred who were for me, and the rest were rather for the vicar. I answered, I was very glad that these words fell out to be spoken in the bishop's hearing. To the first accusation, I told him, that he himself knew I invited him to the sacrament, and offered it him kneeling, and that under my hand in writing; that openly, in his hearing, in the pulpit, I had promised and told both him and all the rest, I never had nor never would put any man from the sacrament on account of kneeling, but leave every one to the posture he should choose. I further stated, that the reason I never gave it to any kneeling, was because all who came would sit or stand, and those who were for kneeling only followed him, who would not come unless I would administer it to him and his party on a day by themselves, when the rest were not present; and I had no mind to be the author of such a schism, and make, as it were, two Churches of one. But especially the consciousness of notorious scandal, which they knew they must be accountable for, did make many kneelers stay away; and all this he could not deny. As to the second charge, I stated, there was a witness ready, to say as he did. I knew but one man

in the town against me, which was a stranger newly come, one Ganderton, an attorney, steward to the Lord of Abergavenny, a Papist, who was lord of the manor. This one man was the prosecutor, and witnessed how many were against my return. I craved of the bishop that I might send by the next post to know their minds, and if that were so, I would take it for a favour to be kept from thence. When the people heard this at Kidderminster, in a day's time they gathered the hands of sixteen hundred of the eighteen hundred communicants, and the rest were such as were from home. Within four or five days after, I happened to find Sir Ralph Clare with the bishop again, and showed him the hands of sixteen hundred communicants, with an offer of more if they might have time, all very earnest for my return. Sir Ralph was silenced as to that point; but he and the bishop appeared so much more against my return.

“The letter, which the Lord Chancellor upon his own offer wrote for me to Sir Ralph Clare, he gave at my request unsealed; and so I took a copy of it before I sent it away, thinking the chief use would be to keep it, and compare it with their dealings. It was as followeth :—

“SIR,—I am a little out of countenance, that after the discovery of such a desire in His Majesty that Mr. Baxter should be settled in Kidderminster, as he was heretofore, and my promise to you by the king's direction, that Mr. Dance should very punctually receive a

recompense by way of a rent upon his or your bills charged here upon my steward, Mr. Baxter hath yet no fruit of this His Majesty's good intention towards him ; so that he hath too much reason to believe that he is not so frankly dealt with in this particular as he deserves to be. I do again tell you, that it will be very acceptable to the king if you can persuade Mr. Dance to surrender that charge to Mr. Baxter ; and in the meantime, and till he is preferred to as profitable an employment, whatever agreement you shall make with him for an annual rent, it shall be paid quarterly upon a bill from you charged upon my steward, Mr. Clutterbucke ; and for the exact performance of this you may securely pawn your full credit. I do most earnestly entreat you, that you will with all speed inform me what we may depend upon in this particular, that we may not keep Mr. Baxter in suspense, who hath deserved very well from His Majesty, and of whom His Majesty hath a very good opinion ; and I hope you will not be the less desirous to comply with him for the particular recommendation of—

“ ‘ Sir,

“ ‘ Your very affectionate servant,

“ ‘ EDWARD HYDE.’

“ Can anything be more serious, cordial, and obliging than all this? For a Lord Chancellor, that hath the business of the kingdom upon his hand, and lords attending him, to take up his time so much and often

about so low a vicarage or a curateship, when it is not in the power of the king and the Lord Chancellor to procure it for him, though they so vehemently desire it! But oh! thought I, how much better life do poor men live, who speak as they think, and do as they profess, and are never put upon such shifts as these for their present conveniences! Wonderful! thought I, that men who do so much over-value worldly honour and esteem, can possibly so much forget futurity, and think only of the present day, as if they regarded not how their actions be judged of by posterity. Notwithstanding all his extraordinary favour, since the day the king came in I never received, as his chaplain, or as a preacher, or on any account, the value of one farthing of public maintenance. So that I, and many a hundred more, had not had a piece of bread but for the voluntary contribution, whilst we preached, of another sort of people; yea, while I had all this excess of favour, I would have taken it indeed for an excess, as being far beyond my expectations, if they would but have given me liberty to preach the Gospel, without any maintenance, and leave me to beg my bread."

This long extract is the only authentic account of this singular transaction. It is not clear that Clarendon was not in earnest. At a time when party feeling ran high, an arrangement which required tact and delicacy on both sides would probably have been difficult to carry out. Ranke has done much towards vindicating the character of Clarendon in some of the most difficult passages of

his long career. He was by nature a trimmer, and was shrewd enough to know the benefit his party would gain from the kindly treatment of a man like Baxter. Bishop Morley was believed by some to have been anxious to reconcile some of the leading Presbyterians to the Church. The bishop may not have been able to carry out his intentions. Orme, who approaches the subject with a strong bias, evidently thinks that the chancellor and the bishop might have secured Baxter in his position if they pleased.

The separation from his beloved flock almost broke Baxter down. He found refuge in London, and was for some time the colleague of Dr. Bates, at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West. His enemies began to misrepresent his preaching. Few people have been more misunderstood than Baxter. He preached also at St. Bride's, and his labours at this time were miserably requited. His anxiety to live a quiet life was shown in an application he made to the Bishop of London for a license to preach. He was treated with great courtesy, and subscribed a declaration in which he promised not to preach against the doctrine of the Church and the ceremonies in use in the diocese. He returned again to Kidderminster, and offered to be curate to the vicar. This offer was refused, and it is miserable to relate that a farewell sermon and celebration of the holy communion to his attached people was denied him.

By this time Bishop Morley had evidently been

persuaded that it would be impolitic to retain Baxter in his diocese. The bishop and the dean took the strong step of preaching sermons at Kidderminster against the general teaching of the beloved pastor. It is to be feared that this effort only ended in the complete estrangement of the people.

It was a time of rapid movement. The fierce spirits of the Parliament of 1661 were resolved to press matters on. Every member of the Parliament was required to take the sacrament. The Covenant was ordered to be burnt. A complete justification for strong measures was found in the mad insurrection of Venner and the Fifth-Monarchy men. The Act of Uniformity was passed in May, and before August 24th, Saint Bartholomew's day, every minister was required to assent, under penalty of the loss of his preferment, to everything in the Prayer-Book. Baxter ceased to preach on the 25th of May. Some of the lawyers held that a clause in the Act required him as a lecturer to do so. He had made up his mind that absolute conformity was for him impossible, and he was anxious that some of his more hesitating brethren should be made aware, that he at least could not see his way to submission.

This is not the place to discuss the policy which led to the Act of Uniformity. Every impartial student of Baxter's life and times must come to the conclusion that in many respects he could have had little personal difficulty in obeying the requirements of the Act. In-

deed, in the wonderful passage in which he reviews his ministry, quite without a parallel in English theology, those who can read between the lines can see how his soul yearned after a comprehension to which Acts of Parliament hardly presented a barrier. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the conduct of both parties at this time, there can be but one as to the courage and faith with which most of the ministers met their hard fate. Like the leaders of the Free Church in Scotland in 1843, many went out from the Church without a hope of even a bare maintenance. Sacrifices made for the sake of conscience are not extinct. It is by the repetition of noble acts of self-denial and faith that national character is nerved for high and continuous effort.

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CHAPTER V.

THE MARRIAGE AND ITS RESULTS.

SOON after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, an event took place which seems to have made a stir in England. This was the marriage of Baxter. He tells us that before it took place it was "rung about everywhere, partly as a wonder, partly as a crime ; and that the king's marriage was scarcely more talked of than his." He was now in his forty-seventh year. All the world knew that his health was infirm, and to tell the truth it required some boldness on the part of any one to undertake the care of a man, certainly peculiar. Margaret Charlton was the daughter of a Shropshire justice of the peace, and must certainly have been no ordinary person. Her mother, in the great struggle of the Civil War, showed great discretion in the management of her affairs. She managed her son's estate well, and after some time spent in settling her matters in Shropshire, she came to Kidderminster, where her daughter Margaret soon joined her. Here the mother and daughter were of the greatest use to Baxter in his personal labours. Margaret seems to have been ready to devote herself entirely to all Baxter's good works.

“The Breviate of her Life,” one of the most interesting and characteristic of Baxter’s writings, leaves upon the reader’s mind the impression of a woman of real nobility of character. She had suffered much from the concealment of her affection. During the troubles of the times of his ministry at Kidderminster, Baxter believed that marriage would have hindered his work. Many obstacles and delays were at last removed, and although there was a disparity between their ages (she was but twenty-three at the time), all his objections seemed to have vanished away when the time came for his separation from Kidderminster.

There is something wonderfully touching in the calm and fervent account Baxter gives of the arrangements made before the marriage. “She consented to these conditions of our marriage: first, that I should have nothing that before our marriage was hers; that I, who wanted no earthly supplies, might not seem to marry her for covetousness. Secondly, that she would so alter her affairs, that I might be entangled in no lawsuits. Thirdly, that she would expect none of my time which my ministerial work should require. When we were married, her sadness and melancholy vanished; counsel did something to it, and contentment something, and being taken up with our household affairs did somewhat. We lived in inviolated love and mutual complacency, sensible of the benefit of mutual help, nearly nineteen years. I know not that ever we had any breach in point of love or point of interest, save

only that she somewhat grudged that I had persuaded her for my quietness to surrender so much of her estate, to the disabling her from helping others so much as she earnestly desired. But that even this was not from a covetous mind is evident from these instances. Though her portion, which was two thousand pounds beside what she gave up, was by ill debtors two hundred pounds lost in her mother's time, and two hundred pounds after, before her marriage; and all she had, reduced to about one thousand six hundred and fifty pounds; yet she never grudged at anything that the poverty of debtors deprived her of."

For some time the life of Baxter and his wife must have been thoroughly uncomfortable. They moved from place to place, but Margaret bore all this trouble unmurmuringly. The first years after the passing of the Act were years of great depression. Some of the writings of Baxter produced at this time contain sad evidences of the effect produced upon his spirit by the sufferings and hardships of his brethren. Open persecution is sometimes more easy to bear than the vexatious espionage enforced on the Nonconformists. A prayer-meeting for the recovery of a sick woman was denounced as the keeping of a conventicle. Many instances of needless oppression are recorded. During, however, the mild and peaceable reign of Archbishop Juxon, attempts were made to relax the rigour of the enactments. Sheldon, his successor, was the advocate of more stringent measures and with his accession to

the primacy fresh difficulties arose. Baxter, in his account of this time, says that he possessed the favour of some of the leading prelates. It must be admitted that his habit of constant interference in particular cases must often have led him into trouble; and there can be no doubt, that many of the leading clergy in London must have rejoiced when they heard of his intention of settling at Acton, in 1663, where he intended to spend his life in study and retirement. His pen was unceasingly active. Several practical and controversial works were written between the time when he left Kidderminster and the year 1665. His reputation had reached the Continent. Some eminent men in France and Switzerland were anxious to engage him in correspondence, but the strict watch kept upon him frustrated all such intentions. His account of the Great Plague of London is most interesting. During part of the time when the plague was raging, he was safely entertained by the son of John Hampden, in Buckinghamshire. It is certainly most creditable to the Non-conformists, that they continued to labour at their posts in the face of the danger. The Bishop of London, as appears from some letters in Sir Henry Ellis's collection, had some difficulty in restraining some of his clergy from desertion.

A common danger did not mitigate the fierce spirit of controversy. More rigorous measures were adopted, and the exasperation of the clergy against Nonconforming ministers reached a terrible height. No defence

has ever been made of the provisions of the Five Mile Act, in which it was declared that all who would not swear that it was unlawful, on any ground, to take up arms against the king, should be banished five miles from any place returning members to Parliament. An absolute infatuation seemed at this time to have seized upon the nation. The popular hatred against Papists was only equalled by that against Nonconformists. Clarendon, during the last few months of his reign of power, allowed those friendly to extreme measures to have their own way. He clung to office, and certainly in his fall abandoned the equilibrium he had displayed in earlier days. Buckingham bought some popular favour by promises of remission of penalties in cases of Nonconformity. Nothing, perhaps, can better show the low condition of opinion at this time than the prominence and position given to men of no character, who were favourable to the designs of leading statesmen. Hopes were entertained that toleration and liberty might find some favour at Court; and the meetings of Nonconformists were for a time connived at. Proposals for comprehension and indulgence were made in 1672, and in the various negotiations Baxter took part. It was an age of pamphlets. Those who are curious in such literature will be struck by the forbearance shown to the character of Baxter by many of the writers. It was evidently the desire of many to conciliate a man whose arguments they feared and whose character they respected.

For some years Baxter fixed his residence at Acton. There he enjoyed many pleasant and peaceful hours. In the long roll of eminent English judges, few names are more illustrious than that of Sir Matthew Hale. He was a neighbour of Baxter, with whom he held constant intercourse. Burnet's delightful account of Hale's life is well known. In every way possible Hale did his utmost to secure for Baxter quietness and peace. When men came together to listen to Baxter's expositions, Hale never interfered with them, and in deed his voice was always raised in favour of complete toleration. He belonged to the delightful company of those who were always anxious to discover the higher and nobler parts of character. Baxter was anxious to know the real sentiments of Selden. Hale assured him that Selden "was an earnest professor of the Christian faith, and so angry an adversary to Hobbes, that he hath rated him out of the room." We must give in Baxter's own words the description of the parson of the parish, a man certainly of a different temper from Sir Matthew Hale :—

"The parson of this parish was Dr. Ryves, Dean of Windsor and of Wolverhampton, parson of Hasely and of Acton, chaplain in ordinary to the king, etc. His curate was a weak young man, who spent most of his time in the ale-houses, and read a few dry sentences to the people once a day. Yet, because he preached true doctrine, and I had no better to hear, I constantly heard him when he preached, and went to the beginning

of the common prayer. As my house faced the church door, and was within hearing of it, those that heard me before went with me to the church ; scarcely three, that I know of, in the parish refusing. When I preached, after the public exercise, they went out of the church into my house. It pleased the doctor and parson that I came to church and brought others with me, but he was not able to bear the sight of people crowding into my house, though they heard him also ; so that though he spoke me fair, and we lived in seeming love and peace while he was there, yet he could not long endure it. When I had brought the people to church to hear him, he would fall upon them with groundless reproaches, as if he had done it purposely to drive them away ; and yet he thought that my preaching to them, because it was in a house, did all the mischief, though he never accused me of anything that I spake, for (I preached nothing but Christianity and submission to our superiors, faith, repentance, hope, love, humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, and obedience.) He was the more offended because I came not to the sacrament with him, though I communicated in the other parish churches in London and elsewhere. I was loth to offend him by giving him the reason, which was that he was commonly reputed a swearer, a curser, a railer, etc. In those tender times, it would have been so great an offence to the congregational brethren if I had communicated with him, and perhaps have hastened their sufferings who durst not do the same, that I thought it would do more harm than good."

It would be difficult to heighten the picture of the times presented to us in this extract. Dean Ryves, it must be said, had in his time suffered from the harsh measures of the parliamentary forces ; but he certainly, when his own hour of power had arrived, forgot mercy and forbearance. At his instance the justices of Brentford condemned Baxter for holding a conventicle. The population of Acton expressed great indignation when it was determined to send their neighbour to prison. Sir Matthew Hale could hardly restrain his tears when he heard of the issue of the warrant. The imprisonment, however, had some compensations. His wife, says Baxter, "was never so cheerful a companion to me as in prison, and was very much against my seeking to be released. She had brought so many necessaries, that we kept house as contentedly and as comfortably as at home, though in a narrower room, and had the sight of more of my friends in a day than I had at home in half a year." In fact, the dean and the justices had committed a great blunder. The moderate party of the clergy, according to Baxter, were much offended, and saw how odious the folly of his persecutors had made the clergy. Lord Orrery was among those who spoke plainly to the king. Some legal difficulties were in the way, but at length this imprisonment came to an end.

Baxter was now in difficulties. His persecutors had made it impossible for him to go back to Acton, and he was obliged to spend a year in cold and smoky quarters at Totteridge, near Barnet, and underwent much pain

from sciatica. When in prison his intellectual activity was great. He discussed with Owen a scheme of comprehension, and exhibited very considerable asperity in the conduct of the dispute. Owen certainly kept his temper better than his opponent, and the courtesy of his tone contrasts favourably with Baxter's.

There was no lull in the war against tolerance. In the year 1670 the Conventicle Act was renewed, although Bishop Wilkins, with characteristic high-mindedness, refused to do the king's bidding, and gave the Act his strenuous opposition in the House of Lords. Baxter believed that some clauses of the Act were inserted with a view to his position. Men in high places feared his influence. In the same year the Earl of Lauderdale offered him preferment in Scotland, where he was shortly about to commence the reign of power fraught with such important results to that country. Baxter's refusal is contained in an admirable letter, which gives some particulars of his domestic life. "I have a family, and in it a mother-in-law of 80 years of age, of honourable extract and great worth, whom I must not neglect, and who cannot travel. To such an one as I, it is so great a business to remove a family, with all our goods and books so far, that it deterreth me from thinking of it, especially having paid so dear for removals these eight years as I have done; and being but yesterday settled in a house which I have newly taken, and that with great trouble and loss of time. And if I should find Scotland disagree with me, which I fully conclude it

would, I must remove all back again." He spoke of his desire to complete a theological work, and dwelt pathetically upon the weariness of contention, and his own desire for a quiet life. With Lauderdale he had some further correspondence upon the state of religious feeling throughout the land. Possibly if Baxter had gone to Scotland he might have been able to mitigate the harsh extremities of Lauderdale's administration. It has been thought by some that the whole transaction was simply an ingenious device to remove Baxter from the sphere of his influence. On the eve of the Restoration, however, there had been some previous dealings with Lauderdale on Baxter's part, and it is possible that the strange being, who had some taste for theological dispute, had been drawn towards Baxter by the earnestness and simplicity of his character.

Some attempt was made to stop the circulation of Baxter's writings. Mr. Robert Grove, one of the Bishop of London's chaplains, of a well-known Wiltshire family, licensed his books and stood his friend. This service, as well as the kindness of Mr. Cook, the Archbishop's chaplain, are gratefully remembered in the interesting review of the years 1670 and 1671. In Serjeant Fountain he had a true friend, and at his death he lost a small annuity.

The necessities of the king led, as is well known, in 1671, to the shutting up of the exchequer. Baxter, like like many others, was a sufferer. All his small fortune was lost. The account he gives is so characteristic that

it must not be omitted : “ Among others, all the money and estate that I had in the world, of my own, was there, except ten pounds per annum, which I enjoyed for eleven or twelve years. Indeed, it was not my own, which I will mention to counsel those that would do good to do it speedily, and with all their might. I had got in all my life the net sum of one thousand pounds. Having no child, I devoted almost all of it to a charitable use, a free school ; I used my best and ablest friends for seven years, with all the skill and industry I could, to help me to some purchase of house or land to lay it out on, that it might be accordingly settled. But though there were never more sellers, I could never, by all these friends, hear of any that reason could encourage a man to lay it out on, as secure, and a tolerable bargain ; so that I told them, I did perceive the devil’s resistance of it, and did verily suspect that he would prevail and I should never settle, but it would be lost. So hard is it to do any good when a man is fully resolved. Divers such observations verily confirm me that there are devils that keep up a war against goodness in the world.”

Wherever he lived, Baxter’s thoughts always reverted to Worcestershire. In the third part of his memoirs there are some interesting notices of the various ministers who were silenced under the intolerant measures of the time. He particularly mentions Mr. Benjamin Baxter, of Upton, a preacher of wonderful power, and it is interesting to find mention of a certain Mr. Thomas Foley, who

not only founded a well known hospital, still doing good in the world, but planted in Stourbridge and Kidderminster—the patronage of which he acquired by purchase—sons whose residence was a blessing to the people. On Kidderminster his thoughts were constantly dwelling. When he records the death of an old freeholder there, he exclaims, “Oh, how many holy souls are gone to Christ out of that one parish of Kidderminster in a few years, and yet the number seemeth to increase.”

In 1672 the famous declaration giving liberty of preaching to the Nonconformists was issued. It originated in a wish to do something for the Roman Catholic party. It was needful, however, to propitiate the Nonconformists. According to Burnet, many of the leaders obtained pensions. Baxter would not touch a penny.

He was attacked at this time with a severe fit of sickness. He recovered, however, sufficiently to be able, after ten years' silence, on the day of his baptism to recommence his public ministry. The declaration was declared by the Parliament, early in the following year, to be illegal. In some places the old penalties were enforced. We find Baxter now settled in a house in Bloomsbury, and busied with much preaching and writing. At no time of his life was he ever on cordial terms with the Independent body. He could not, if the complaints of some Independents are to be trusted, refrain from indulging in reflections on their conduct in the pulpit.

He was never free from sickness and weakness. In

1674 he was obliged to abandon some of his work. The presence of mind of his wife was shown to advantage when Baxter was preaching at St. James's market-house during this year. A main beam gave way. Mrs. Baxter, on hearing a crack, left the congregation, and found a carpenter, who at once propped up the beam. The noise made alarmed the people, but a senseless rush was prevented by Baxter's firmness. Next day the terrible condition of the floor gave evidence of the danger.

The storm of opposition rose higher. Again and again attempts at union were brought forward in vain. Tillotson and Stillingfleet made honourable exertions for peace and quietness, but all their efforts failed. Baxter was obliged to submit to the constant vexation of informations laid against him. On one occasion he was fined £50. His wife bravely encouraged him to submit, and by her efforts many of his valuable books were hidden or given away, to avoid distraint. Harvard College, in America, was benefited by this unjust fine. When we read the amazing account Baxter gives of his own ailments, and the constant annoyance he was subjected to on all sides, it is really marvellous that he was capable of any exertion whatever. It is needless to follow him from one place of worship to another. Persecution seems to have raised up for him many friends. For twenty-four Sundays in succession his chapel in Swallow Street was watched by informers. It is right, however, to remember that the interruptions of

his ministry would have been less numerous had he abstained from allusions to the political troubles of the time.

We find him, in 1682, preaching in New Street. "I took," he says, "that day my leave of the pulpit and public work in a thankful congregation, and it was like indeed to be my last." No sooner, however, was his sermon ended than he was seized under a warrant. According to Baxter, Charles II. was averse to this harsh treatment, and said, "Let him die in his bed." It is a miserable story. The old man, racked with disease, was deprived of his goods, and had to leave his house and take secret lodgings at a distance in a stranger's house. Other trials awaited him. Two years afterwards he was again made the subject of an infamous information. We conclude the terrible record of unmerited punishment with the final passage of his memorials.

"On the 11th of December, 1684," he says, "I was forced, in all my pain and weakness, to be carried to the sessions house, or else my bonds of four hundred pounds would have been judged forfeit. The more moderate justices, who promised my discharge, would none of them be there, but left the work to Sir William Smith and the rest, who openly declared that they had nothing against me, and took me for innocent, but that I must continue bound lest others should expect to be discharged also; which I openly refused. My sureties, however, would be bound against my declared will, lest

I should die in jail ; and so I must continue. Yet they discharged others as soon as I was gone. I was told they did all by instructions from —, and that the main end was to restrain me from writing ; which now should I do with the greatest caution, they will pick out something that a jury make take for a breach of my bonds. January 17th, I was forced again to be carried to the sessions, and after divers good words, which put me in expectation of freedom, when I was gone, one Justice Deerham said, that it was likely these persons solicited for my freedom that they might hear me in conventicles. On that they bound me again in a four hundred pound bond for above a quarter of a year ; and so it is like it will be till I die, or worse, though no one ever accused me for any conventicle or preaching since they took all my books and goods about two years ago, and I for the most part keep my bed. Mr. Jenkins died in Newgate this week, January 19th, 1684-5, as Mr. Bampfield, Mr. Raphson, and others died lately before him. The prison where so many are, suffocates the spirits of aged ministers ; but blessed be God, that gave them so long time to preach before at cheaper rates ! One Richard Baxter, a Sabbatarian Anabaptist, was sent to jail for refusing the oath of allegiance, and it went current that it was I. As to the present state of England—the plots ; the execution of men high and low ; the public counsels and designs ; the qualities and practice of judges and bishops ; the sessions and justices ; the quality of the clergy, and the universities

and patrons ; the church government by lay civilians ; the usage of ministers and private meetings for preaching or prayer ; the expectations of what is next to be done, etc.,—the reader must expect none of this sort of history from me. No doubt there will be many volumes of it transmitted by others to posterity, who may do it more fully than I can now do."

He was now alone in the world. On the 14th of June, 1681, she of whom he says, "She was the meekest helper that I could have had in the world," had passed away. She was only forty when she died. Throughout her married life she had experienced many trials ; but Howe, who preached her funeral sermon, has testified to the perfect patience and resignation with which she met all her troubles. The "Breviat of the Life of Mrs. Margaret Baxter" was published shortly after her death, and is certainly as delightful a tribute to worth and piety as was ever paid to woman. We can form from its pages some idea of a noble and devoted character. With her husband's occasional rashness of speech, and what he calls backwardness in duty, she was often vexed, but would "modestly" tell him of it. Her catholic spirit readily led her to acknowledge the good points even in those most opposed to her husband's ways and thoughts.

Throughout the memoir of his wife, Baxter evidently keeps his feeling under strict control, and this is indeed its great charm. There is a touching passage in which, after mentioning the holy lives of his step-mother, spared

till she was a hundred years old, and that of the faithful housekeeper, Jane Matthews, who died shortly before his wife, he speaks of his mother-in-law, a woman of great character also: "She is gone after many of my choicest friends, who within one year are gone to Christ, and I am following even at the door. Had I been to enjoy them only here, it would have been but a short comfort mixed with the many troubles which all our failings and sins, and some degree of unsuitableness between the nearest and dearest, cause. But I am going after them to that blessed society where life, light, and love, and therefore harmony, concord, and joy, are perfect and everlasting."

Baxter buried his wife in Christchurch, then in ruins, in her mother's tomb. The last two lines of the epitaph enforce the lesson he was never weary of preaching,—

"Hear, now, this preaching grave : without delay
Believe, repent, and work while it is day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRIAL AND THE END.

THE sufferings of Baxter during the last few years of his life were almost intolerable. Few periods in English history are more terrible than the close of the reign of Charles II. The general gloom was increased by the fear existing as to the designs of James II. In the year of his accession, Baxter had published a work on the New Testament. There was nothing in its pages to justify the issue of a warrant, in which the work was described as seditious and scandalous. Baxter, fearing the confinement of a prison, went into the country, having applied for a *habeas corpus*. Counsel moved on the 18th May for delay on account of his state of health. The infamous Jefferies exclaimed, "I will not give him a minute's time more, to save his life. We have had 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 stands Oates in the pillory, 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."

Fortunately for English justice there are few records of trials like Baxter's. In reading the particulars of this disgraceful affair, it is impossible to refrain from astonishment, that even in that degraded age such outrages were possible. The trial began on the 30th of May. Sir Henry Ashurst, a faithful friend through life, stood by the prisoner. He had engaged the celebrated Pollexfen to defend Baxter, and the first outbreak of the Chief Justice burst forth when the counsel, desirous of defending some of Baxter's interpretations, made a reference to Dr. Hammond. It is needless to recount the violent and abominable utterances of Jefferies. Mr. Orme, in his life of Baxter, has given extracts from a manuscript written by a person who was present at the trial. In most respects it agrees with the account given by Calamy. The boldness of Pollexfen, who remonstrated against the stopping of Nonconformist utterances, was thus treated by the Chief Justice. "Pollexfen," said Jefferies, "I know you well; I will set a mark upon you; you are the patron of the faction. This is an old rogue, who has poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrine. Don't we know how he preached formerly, 'Curse ye Meroz; curse them bitterly that come not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' He encouraged all the women and maids to bring their bodkins and thimbles to carry on their war against the king of ever blessed memory. An old schismatical knave, a hypocritical villain!" "I beseech your lordship," said Pollexfen, "suffer me a

word for my client. It is well known to all intelligent men of age in this nation that these things do not apply to the character of Mr. Baxter, who wished as well to the king and royal family as Mr. Love, who lost his head for endeavouring to bring in the son long before he was festored. And, my lord, Mr. Baxter's loyal and peaceable spirit King Charles would have rewarded with a bishoprick when he came in, if he would have conformed." "Aye, aye," said the judge, "we know that; but what ailed the old blockhead, the unthankful villain, that he would not conform? Was he wiser or better than other men? He hath been ever since the spring of the faction. I am sure he hath poisoned the world with his linsey-woolsey doctrine." In vain was it urged by another counsel that Baxter, although he had said hard things of Romish prelates, used no language but that of respect in speaking of English bishops. Baxter also declared that he had incurred the censure of his brethren for his moderation. The Chief Justice burst forth, "Baxter for bishops! that's a merry conceit indeed. I know what you mean by bishops, rascals like yourselves; Kidderminster bishops; factious, snivelling Presbyterians." Again Baxter attempted to speak, but a violent outbreak of abuse silenced him. Many of the bystanders were in tears, and this miserable scene of brow-beating and injustice at last came to an end. "Does your lordship," says Baxter, "think any jury would pretend to pass a verdict upon me, upon such a trial." "I'll warrant you, Mr. Baxter," said Jefferies;

“don't you trouble yourself about that.” The jurors, chosen by the partisan sheriffs, from strong opponents of the prisoner, went through the farce of deliberation for a minute or two, and returned Baxter guilty. There were clergymen in attendance who were ready to testify to his merits as a divine and a lover of peace, but they were not allowed to be heard. As the venerable man left the court, he alluded to his great friend, Sir Matthew Hale, in words which might have touched the hardest heart; but the Chief Justice was unmoved, and it was believed that he had actually proposed to his brethren, that a man who had been offered and had refused a bishopric should be whipped through the streets at a cart's tail. The scandal, however, of such a sentence was prevented by the three judges who sat with Jefferies on the bench. He was fined five hundred marks, and was condemned to imprisonment till the sum was paid.

It appears clear that a remarkable letter to the Bishop of London was written between the delivery of the verdict and the pronouncement of the sentence. It is necessary to give this letter entire, as it contains a simple statement of the attitude Baxter preserved towards the Church of England. No imprisonment or injustice shook the resolution which he maintained during the few and troubled years still remaining to him :—

“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 on the New Testament,' purposely fitted 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 overthrowing 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 scandalised 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 defence, and I have cause to expect a severe judgment the beginning of the next term. All this is on a charge that my unquestionable words were meant by me to scandalise the Church, which I utterly deny. If God will have me end a painful, weary life by such a 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 conformed to as much as the Act of Uniformity obliged one in my condi-

tion. I have drawn multitudes into the Church, and written to justify the Church and ministry against separation, when the Paraphrase was in the press; and my displeasing writings (whose eagerness and faults I justify not) have been my earnest 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; 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 them with 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), but for fear of displeasing you by length. For expositions of Scripture to be thus tried by such 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 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.”

Baxter was permitted to have his own servants in attendance on him in prison. Matthew Henry has left an interesting account of a visit he paid to him. His tranquillity was great, and he drew consolation from some little alleviations, which would hardly indeed have appeared such to most men. Through the kindness of Lord Powis a release from the Crown was granted towards the close of 1686. He lived for some time within the rules of the prison, but in the following year removed to a house in Charterhouse Yard. When his feeble health permitted exertion, he assisted Sylvester in his ministry.

Unfortunately we have no record from his own pen of the last few years of his life. It is a pleasure to think that these years were free from molestation. He took little part in political discussion. He refused, however, to address the Crown when the famous declaration for liberty of conscience, really issued in the interests of Romanists, spread confusion through the land. Like all Nonconformists, he embraced the privileges bestowed by the declaration. His name does not appear in the list of the ministers of London who addressed the Prince of Orange on his arrival. Very possibly the strict views he held on the subject of royal succession placed some difficulty in his way.

The observations of Baxter on the subscription required to the greater part of the Thirty-nine Articles may still be read with interest. The real moderation of his mind is observable in every sentence. Few amongst his Nonconformist brethren at that time would have ventured to express a hope regarding the salvation of Socrates, Cicero, Epictetus, Plutarch, and many other famous men of old. He, if ever any man did, saw that articles of faith, to be really effective, must be articles of peace. Indeed, the reader of his remarks on the Three Creeds, cannot fail to be reminded of the argument advanced by the venerable historian of Latin Christianity to his colleagues on a Royal Commission in our own day. There is no reason to believe, as Mr. Orme thinks, that Baxter took any active part in framing the Nonconformist Articles, intended by Howe to reconcile entirely Presbyterian and Independent differences. The picture which Sylvester has given us of the last few months is a most pleasing one. At morning and evening his neighbours were in the habit of joining him at family worship. In his own house, like St. Paul at Rome, "he preached the kingdom of God, and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." Dr. Bates, in his funeral sermon, has given us particulars of his last days. On one occasion it is said, that, "After a slumber, he waked and said, 'I shall rest from my labour.' A minister then present said, 'And your works will follow you.' To whom he re-

plied, 'No works; I will leave out works, if God will grant me the other.' When a friend was comforting him with the remembrance of the good many had received by his preaching and writings, he said, 'I was but a pen in God's hands; and what praise is due to a pen?' His resigned submission to the will of God in his sharp sickness was evident. When extremity of pain constrained him earnestly to pray to God for his release by death, he would check himself: 'It is not fit for me to prescribe—when Thou wilt, what Thou wilt, and how Thou wilt.' Being in great anguish, he said, 'Oh! how unsearchable are His ways, and His paths past finding out; the reaches of His providence we cannot fathom!' And to his friends, 'Do not think the worse of religion for what you see me suffer.'"

On Monday, Dec. 7th, 1691, Baxter had a terrible attack of pain. His bodily sufferings must indeed have been great, and Mrs. Bushel, his housekeeper, asked him if he knew her or not. He softly cried, "Death, death." He lingered through the night, and was able to say words of kindness to his colleague, Sylvester, and indeed his speculative intellect was still busy. Foolish rumours as to his having expressed a doubt in his last hours were absolutely contradicted by Sylvester after his death. Although he felt persuaded that his soul was safe in the hands of Christ, his mind was full of trembling adoration, and Sylvester records his quietness and confidence, without "transport of spirit." At four o'clock, on Tuesday, Dec. 8th, Baxter closed his

long and memorable life. He was buried in Christchurch, near the graves of his wife and mother-in-law. Many of the clergy attended the funeral. It was felt not in London only, but throughout England, that a fearless and noble worthy had passed into the rest which he had so truly depicted. "Rest from sin, but not from worship; from sorrow, but not from solace."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETROSPECT.

“LOSE not a day in reading the last twenty-four pages of the first part of Baxter’s narrative of his own life ; you will never repent of it,” said the late Sir James Stephen to Dean Stanley. The advice was at once taken, and from the day on which the large-hearted divine delivered his inaugural lectures at Oxford as Professor of Ecclesiastical History, until the last time of his ministration in the Abbey where his remains now lie, he was never weary of enlarging on the wonderful and teaching passage which has been often reprinted, and ought to be in the hands of every student of Baxter’s life. Indeed there are few things in the whole range of Christian biography to be compared with it. To use the words of an address, felicitously delivered by Dean Stanley on the occasion of the unveiling of a noble statue which stands in the centre of Kidderminster, “it sums up ‘the soul’s experiment’ by which the venerable man, at the close of his eventful life, acquaints his readers ‘what change God had made upon his mind and heart since the unriper times of his youth, and where he had differed in judgment and

disposition from his former self.' The interest of this summary is not merely that it reiterates in every shape and form that desire for unity of which I have already spoken, but that it points out the various stages by which every serious student of human nature and of his own history may rise above the crude and narrow notions to which all men, especially perhaps all religious men, are exposed in their early or their less instructed years."

The remark of Wilhelm von Humboldt, that no man ever writes a diary or confession without having in his mind an image of some reader, is undoubtedly a true one. Religious diaries are often misleading and bear evident traces of temporary excitement or enthusiasm. Yet they are often full of instruction; and the deepest and truest thoughts of original minds, thrown, as it were, on paper at random, have often had greater results than the most elaborate and carefully constructed treatises. The purity of Baxter's motive in writing the review of his own life gives the passage a most remarkable and peculiar interest. He writes out of the fulness of his heart, in the hope that his experience may be of real benefit to younger brethren. The style, though far from faultless, possesses great purity and dignity. Where all is excellent, it is difficult to make judicious selection. The following passages are, however, really essential to the complete understanding of Baxter's unique position in English theology:—

"The temper of my mind hath somewhat altered

with the temper of my body. When I was young I was more vigorous, affectionate, and fervent in preaching, conference, and prayer, than ordinary I can be now. My style was more extemporate and lax, but by the advantage of warmth, and a very familiar, moving voice and utterance, my preaching then did more affect the auditory than it did many of the last years before I gave over preaching. But what I delivered then was much more raw, and had more passages that would not bear the trial of accurate judgments; and my discourses had both less substance and less judgment than of late. My understanding was then quicker, and could more easily manage any thing that was newly presented to it upon a sudden; but it is since better furnished and acquainted with the ways of truth and error, and with a multitude of particular mistakes of the world, which then I was the more in danger of, because I had only the faculty of knowing them, but did not actually know them. I was then like a man of quick understanding, that was to travel a way which he never went before, or to cast up an account which he never laboured in before, or to play on an instrument of music which he never saw before. I am now like one of somewhat a slower understanding, who is travelling a way which he hath often gone, and is casting up an account which he hath ready at hand, and that is playing on an instrument which he hath frequently used: so that I can very confidently say my judgment is much sounder and firmer now than it

was then ; for though I am now as competent a judge of the actings of my own understanding as then, I can judge better of the effects. When I peruse the writings which I wrote in my younger years, I can find the footsteps of my unfurnished mind, and of my emptiness and insufficiency ; so that the man that followed my judgment then, was likelier to have been misled by me than he that should follow it now. . . .

“ My judgment is much more for frequent and serious meditation on the heavenly blessedness than it was in my younger days. I then thought that a sermon on the attributes of God and the joys of heaven was not the most excellent ; and was wont to say, ‘ Everybody knoweth that God is great and good, and that heaven is a blessed place ; I had rather hear how I may attain it.’ Nothing pleased me so well as the doctrine of regeneration and the marks of sincerity, because these things were suitable to me in that state ; but now I had rather read, hear, meditate on God and heaven, than on any other subject. I perceive that it is the object which altereth and elevateth the mind ; which will resemble that which it most frequently feedeth on. It is not only useful to and comfort to be much in heaven in believing thoughts ; it must animate all our other duties, and fortify us against every temptation and sin. The love of the end is the poise or spring which setteth every wheel a-going, and must put us on to all the means ; for a man is no more a Christian indeed than he is heavenly.” . . .

“I now see more good and more evil than heretofore I did, I see that good men are not so good as I once thought they were, but have more imperfections; and that nearer approach and fuller trial do make the best appear more weak and faulty than their admirers at a distance think. I find that few are so bad as either malicious enemies or censorious, separating professors do imagine. In some, indeed, I find that human nature is corrupted into a greater likeness to devils than I once thought that any on earth had been; but even in the wicked, usually, there is more for grace to make advantage of, and more to testify for God and holiness, than I once believed there had been.” . . .

“My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of this miserable world, and more drawn out in desire of its conversion, than heretofore. I was wont to look but little further than England in my prayers, not considering the state of the rest of the world; or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now, as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of the Lord’s prayer, there is nothing in the world that lieth so heavy upon my heart, as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. It is the most astonishing part of all God’s providence to me, that He so far forsaketh almost all the world, and confineth His special favour to so few; that so small a part of the world hath the profession of Christianity, in comparison of heathens, Mahometans, and other infidels; that among professed Christians there are so

few that are seriously religious, and who truly set their hearts on heaven. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations or the land of my nativity, as with the case of the heathen, Mahometan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayers are so deeply serious as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified, and His kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Nor was I ever before so sensible what a plague the division of languages is, which hindereth our speaking to them for their conversion. Nor what a great sin tyranny is, which keepeth out the Gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could we but go among Tartars, Turks, and heathens, and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred ministers at once in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here, and in Scotland and Ireland; there being no employment in the world so desirable in my eyes as to labour for the winning of such miserable souls; which maketh me greatly honour Mr. John Elliot, the apostle of the Indians in New England, and whoever else have laboured in such work. I am more deeply affected for the disagreements of Christians than I was when I was a younger Christian. Except the case of the infidel world, nothing is so bad and grievous to my thoughts as the case of divided Churches; and therefore I am more deeply sensible of the sinfulness of those prelates and pastors of Churches who are the principal cause of

these divisions. Oh! how many millions of souls are kept by them in ignorance and ungodliness, and deluded by faction as if it were true religion. How is the conversion of infidels hindered by them, and Christ and religion heinously dishonoured! The contentions between the Greek Church and the Roman, the Papists and the Protestants, the Lutherans and the Calvinists, have woefully hindered the kingdom of Christ. I am further than ever I was from expecting great matters of unity, splendour, or prosperity to the Church on earth, or that saints should dream of a kingdom of this world, or flatter themselves with the hope of a golden age, or of reigning over the ungodly, till there be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. On the contrary, I am more apprehensive that suffering must be the Church's most ordinary lot; and true Christians must be self-denying cross-bearers, even where there are none but formal, nominal Christians to be the cross-makers; for though, ordinarily, God would have vicissitudes of summer and winter, day and night, that the Church may grow externally in the summer of prosperity, and intensively and radically in the winter of adversity; yet usually their night is longer than their day, and that day itself hath its storms and tempests." . . .

"If I were among the Greeks, the Lutherans, the Independents, yea, the Anabaptists, owning no heresy, nor setting themselves against charity and peace, I would sometimes hold occasional communion with them as Christians, if they would give me leave without forcing

me to any sinful subscription or action; though my most usual communion should be with that society which I thought most agreeable to the Word of God if I were free to choose. I cannot be of their opinion that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer-Book, and that such forms are a self-invented worship, which God rejecteth; nor yet can I be of their mind that say the like of extempore prayers." . . .

"I am more and more pleased with a solitary life, and though in a way of self-denial I could submit to the most public life for the service of God, when He requireth it, and would not be unprofitable that I might be private, yet I must confess it is much more pleasing to myself to be retired from the world, and to have very little to do with men, and to converse with God and conscience and good books. Though I was never very much tempted to the sin of covetousness, yet my fear of dying was wont to tell me that I was not sufficiently loosened from the world; but I find that it is comparatively very easy to me to be loose from this world, but hard to live by faith above. To despise earth is easy to me; but not so easy to be acquainted and conversant with heaven. I have nothing in this world which I could not easily let go; but to get satisfying apprehensions of the other world is the great and grievous difficulty." . . .

"Having mentioned the changes which I think were for the better, I must add, that as I confessed many of

my sins before, so I have been guilty of many since, because materially they seemed small, have had the less resistance, and yet on the review do trouble me more than if they had been greater, done in ignorance. It can be no small sin formally, which is committed against knowledge and conscience and deliberation, whatever excuse it have. To have sinned while I preached and wrote against sin, and had such abundant and great obligations from God, and made so many promises against it, doth lay me very low : not so much in fear of hell, as in great displeasure against myself, and such self-abhorrence as would cause revenge upon myself, were it not forbidden. When God forgiveth me I cannot forgive myself ; especially for my rash words or deeds, by which I have seemed injurious and less tender and kind than I should have been to my near and dear relations, whose love abundantly obliged me. When such are dead, though we never differed in point of interest, or any other matter, every sour, or cross, provoking word which I gave them, maketh me almost irreconcilable to myself, and tells me how repentance brought some of old to pray to the dead whom they had wronged, to forgive them, in the hurry of their passion. That which I named before, by the by, is grown one of my great diseases ; I have lost much of that zeal which I had to propagate any truths to others, save the mere fundamentals. When I perceive people or ministers to think they know what indeed they do not, which is too common, and to dispute those things which they never

thoroughly studied, or expect that I should debate the case with them, as if an hour's talk would serve instead of an acute understanding, and seven years' study, I have no zeal to make them of my opinion, but an impatience of continuing discourse with them on such subjects, and am apt to be silent or to turn to something else; which, though there be some reason for it, I feel cometh from a want of zeal for the truth, and from an impatient temper of mind. I am ready to think that people should quickly understand all in a few words; and if they cannot, to despair of them, and leave them to themselves. I know the more that this is sinful in me, because it is partly so in other things, even about the faults of my servants or other inferiors; if three or four times warning do no good to them, I am much tempted to despair of them, turn them away, and leave them to themselves. I mention all these distempers that my faults may be a warning to others to take heed, as they call on myself for repentance and watchfulness. O Lord! for the merits, and sacrifice, and intercession of Christ, be merciful to me a sinner, and forgive my known and unknown sins!"

The intensity and reality of these passages thoroughly justify the warm eulogy that has been pronounced upon them by men widely differing from one another in theological sentiment. Sylvester, in his funeral sermon, has a few sentences which confirm the impression produced by Baxter's own recollections. "When he spoke of weighty soul concerns, you might find his very spirit

drenched therein." He adds some particulars as to Baxter's personal habits, which were such as we should naturally expect. "His personal abstinence, severity, and labours were exceeding great. He kept his body under, and always feared 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 in proportion to his abilities. His purse was ever open to the poor; where the case required it, he never thought great sums too much. He suited what he gave to the necessities and character of those he gave to; and his charity was not confined to parties and opinions." If we add to this the words of Bates, that "it was his meat and drink, the life and joy of his life, to do good to souls," we are certainly presented with a picture for ever memorable and for ever worthy of study. In the life of such a man we long to possess some such records as those which have conveyed to the minds of all readers the impression produced by the table-talk of a Luther or a Johnson. Baxter rarely suffers us to see him in undress; and it is to be regretted that the personal matters, which he tells us he intended to add to the life of his wife, were omitted according to the advice of some friends. In the remarkable "Penitent Confession," and necessary vindication, addressed to Bishop Stillingfleet, there are some disclosures of particulars in his life and writings which leave a strong impression as to his desire after fairness and plain dealing. Few men have ever had so complete an indifference as to public opinion.

In person Baxter was tall and slender. The best portrait of him conveys the impression of a grave and thoughtful man, much worn by sickness, who could smile with sweetness and dignity. One of his most valued female friends, the wife of a Scottish earl, in an unpublished letter, tells us that his voice was rich and full.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOCTRINAL DIVINE.

THE loose and characteristic sentence of Burnet, that "Baxter meddled in too many things, and was, most unhappily, subtle and metaphysical in everything," will not, we venture to think, in any way in any degree express the real opinion of those who have delved into the great mine of Baxter's writings. Undoubtedly he was one of the most voluminous of English theologians. Mr. Orme thinks that a uniform edition of all his works could not be comprised in less than sixty volumes, making more than from thirty to forty thousand closely printed pages. Southey, it has been said, would have been more in his right place had he had the custody of some great monastic library. Baxter might have been a happier man had he sat at the feet of one of the great schoolmen, to whom he has often been compared. Very few persons have in these days patience to peruse the "Catholic Theology" and "Methodus Theologiæ Christianæ," the one containing seven hundred, and the other nine hundred folio pages. Yet the future historian of English dogmatic theology must, if he is honest, devote some attention to these

remarkable productions. Every page bears the marks of the greatness of Calvin's influence. No one, however, can call Baxter a formal Calvinist. He occupies a position of his own. It was a true instinct that made men call his theology Baxterian.

In every page of the early dogmatic writings of Baxter we find distinct traces of the influence of Calvin. Yet Baxter, though he began his theological life as a Calvinist, struggled hard to escape from the meshes of the net. He stands apart, in many respects, from all parties, though at times he seems almost in contact with men whose differences were on first principles. It has been said, indeed, that although at the end of his life he would still have called himself a Calvinist, he dressed out Calvinism in Arminian robes. The particular decision of the Synod of Dort, that our Lord died for all men, appeared to Baxter to afford a means of reconciliation between the sterner Calvinistic dogma and the larger Arminian statement. The position, indeed, which Baxter assumed as to this question, was not unlike that taken by Bishop Davenant, of Salisbury, who held that there was an ordination of the elect to faith and glory, while the non-elect were not ordained to unbelief; but that the fact of their impenitence being foreseen, justified the declaration that they were ordained to reprobation. Baxter really, by his constant maintenance of the conditions of duty required from man, undermined the very foundations of the Calvinistic scheme. A remarkable controversy, of quite modern times, may be

said to have been anticipated in many of Baxter's keen and subtle arguments against the more positive dogmatists of the Calvinist School. The position that we cannot know anything of the being of God, he continually contradicted. Scripture,—according to Baxter, who asserts the contrary with as much vehemence as the late Dr. Whewell did, in a passage from a sermon which may be found in his remains,—must be re-written if these dogmatists are to have their own way. The knowledge of God is eternal life. Mere negation could never afford ground for the positive personal love Scripture requires from man, and which is found to be the real stay and experience of faithful souls. We can see and know the character and nature of God in the soul, which is His image. Ideas and conceptions may be inadequate, but they are not untrue. In short, it is clear and evident that Baxter, though ready to admit the imperfection of the knowledge of God possessed by human beings, strove stoutly against any theory which seemed to place an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature, the soul and the Saviour.

In the same way Baxter, although in the opinion of many the leader of the Presbyterians, was by no means at any time in his career a real Presbyterian. Mr. Hunt has well said, "as to conformity, Baxter was always on its very borders." He can hardly be said to have changed his position greatly since the time when, as we have seen, he resisted the "*et cetera* oath." As far as it can be ascertained accurately, his contention

was more against the extreme excesses of the party of which Laud was the head, than the efforts of the few who were trying to combine deference to old usage with increased liberty to the favourers of extempore prayer and other puritan innovations.

Some persons have asserted that there was an inconsistency of conduct in Baxter's effort to bring back the monarchy, and his readiness to receive preferment if certain changes, deemed by him essential, were made. But the truth is, that in his defence of the decisions of the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly, he always maintained that there were certain alterations desirable in doctrine and discipline, which, if granted, would have had the effect of enlarging the borders of the Church of England. Many of his views upon the polity of the Church are contained in the "Treatise of Episcopacy," a work often suspended, but not written until 1671. He held the opinion which has gained great ground in recent years, as to the difference between bishops and presbyters. The bishop, according to Baxter, was to be *primus inter pares*. He wished to return to the primitive condition of things. Every city was to have a bishop, who was to have oversight of a small diocese. Undoubtedly, Baxter may be claimed by those who hold that episcopacy contributes to the *bene esse* of a Church. It is singular to note how Baxter's keen insight, not of course, aided by the accurate historical method of modern research, has led him to somewhat similar conclusions to those adopted

by the present Bishop of Durham, in his well-known essay on the "Christian Ministry." There are few things in the history of controversy more sad than the neglect at the proper moment of such moderate counsels as are to be found in Baxter's treatise. He may have been too sanguine in his belief that the Westminster Assembly, if met in a proper spirit, would have adopted the modified episcopacy recommended. But there can be no doubt that if men, at the Restoration, on both sides, had consented to "let bygones be bygones," a national Church, such as perhaps the future may have in store for Great Britain, might have come within the range of practical politics

It is interesting to observe, that in the last year of Baxter's life, in his "Book of National Churches," he does not in any way depart from the spirit of his earlier writings on the subject. In fact, he assumes more and more the ground occupied by Cranmer, Hooker, and Field, and it is difficult to see that his view of a national Church differs much from the conceptions of these last two writers. He saw very clearly that the growth of the Papacy had been effected by the gradual extinction of national Churches. The noblest part of the speculations, carried perhaps to extravagance by Dr. Arnold, as to the religious character of kings and magistrates, may be said to be expressed in some indignant sentences against the degradation of secular offices. While Baxter was clear as to the proper place to be occupied by the king, or chief ruler, in a

national system, he is always careful to assert for the Church a complete spiritual independence in matters essential to the faith. He was no voluntary in the modern sense of the word, but a fervent believer that in a perfect polity the rights of Church and State could be so wisely maintained as to render encroachment from either side impossible. He opposed the theory, advocated by some of the stronger spirits of the bishops of the Restoration, that a sacerdotal head should be substituted for the just supremacy of the prince. The doors of a national Church, he taught, should be opened to receive all who accepted the Apostles' Creed. Tolerance was to be accorded to all who dissented, *except to those that are heretics.*

This treatise, on account of the peculiar position occupied by Baxter in the latter part of his life, has not received the attention it deserves. It will certainly surprise many readers to find that the position so often maintained as the only one possible to the Church of England, that she rests on Scripture and the practice of those who immediately succeeded the Apostles, is declared by Baxter to be the unique distinction of the Church of England, as her reformers and most eminent divines described her. The wearisome particularity and prolixity of style, painfully evident in many of Baxter's doctrinal writings, is entirely absent in the pages in which he treats of Episcopacy and national religion. There he treads with no uncertain footing, and writes like an Englishman who gloried in

the full possession of personal liberty and access to the truth. In his own practice he gave an example of the reasonable conformity he advocated, for it is known that in his latter years he took the sacrament in church kneeling.

It may be well to describe at greater length Baxter's position as a writer on evidence. Mr. Hunt, in his very able account of his position in the history of "Religious Thought in England," claims a place for him as the first English writer on the evidences of Christianity. Baxter was led to engage in this particular field of theology from the excesses of those sectaries who claimed for themselves the title of special exponents of the mind of the Holy Spirit. Baxter, on the contrary, affirmed that the Holy Spirit did not supersede the exercise of the gift of reason, but illuminated all who, with a hearty desire after truth, exercised the faculties given them by God. "The gift of reason" (we give Mr. Hunt's description of Baxter's view) "is God's gift, as well as the gift of the Spirit. The reason has to be rectified, purified, illuminated; and then the evidence of the truth of Christianity is invincible. The Spirit may be called the efficient cause of our belief; but the question to be examined is the evidence itself, the objective cause. The evidence exists independently of the Spirit's testimony. But for this, men who had not the Spirit would be excusable in their unbelief."

This is an excellent account of the fundamental position occupied by Baxter in his various works on

evidences. Sometimes, indeed, we meet with passages which almost seem to claim a paramount place for reason. But the statements in which he might seem to have anticipated those who claim for the verifying faculty the ultimate court of appeal, must be modified by a reference to what Baxter lays down regarding the revelation of Scripture. To this, he says, there can be no possible addition. The Holy Spirit enables the reason to discover the meaning of Scripture, but has ceased to give any supplementary revelation. The moderation of his tone as a theologian is most remarkable in his treatment of Scripture. There is a passage in his review of his own life, which expresses his highest and deepest thoughts upon the certainty of the Christian faith, which deserves, in these days, the best attention of all students in theology :—

“Among truths, certain in themselves, all are not equally certain unto me ; and even of the mysteries of the Gospel, I must needs say, with Mr. Richard Hooker, in his ‘*Eccles. Polit.*,’ that, whatever men pretend, the subjective certainty cannot go beyond the objective evidence ; for it is caused thereby, as the print on the wax is caused by that on the seal. I do more of late therefore, than ever, discern a necessity of a methodical procedure in maintaining the doctrine of Christianity, and of beginning at natural verities, as presupposed fundamentally to supernatural ; though God may, when he pleases, reveal all at once, and even natural truths by supernatural revelation. It is a marvellous great help

to my faith to find it built on so sure foundations, and so consonant to the law of nature. I am not so foolish as to pretend my certainty to be greater than it is, merely because it is a dishonour to be less certain; nor will I by shame be kept from confessing the infirmities, which those have as much as I, who hypocritically reproach me with them. My certainty that I am a man is before my certainty that there is a God; for *quod facit notum, est magis notum*. My certainty that there is a God is greater than my certainty that He requireth love and holiness of His creature; my certainty of this is greater than my certainty of the life of rewards and punishment hereafter; my certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the endless duration of it, and of the immortality of individuate souls; my certainty of the Deity is greater than my certainty of the Christian faith; my certainty of the Christian faith, in its essentials, is greater than my certainty of the perfection and infallibility of all the holy Scriptures; my certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the meaning of many particular texts, and so of the truth of many particular doctrines, or of the canonicalness of some certain books. So that, as you see by what gradations my understanding doth proceed, so also that my certainty differeth as the evidences differ. And they that will begin all their certainty with that of the truth of the Scripture, as the *principium cognoscendi*, may meet me at the same end; but they must give me leave to undertake to prove to a heathen or infidel the being of a

God, and the necessity of holiness, and the certainty of a reward or punishment, even while yet he denieth the truth of Scripture, and in order to his believing it to be true."

Clement Writer, of Worcester, who had at one time been eminent among the religious writers of his day, fell into infidelity. He began his new career as a writer against a ministry, and followed this production up by an attack against Scripture, and the position taken by Baxter in "The Saint's Rest." Writer seems in an awkward fashion of his own to have anticipated the famous argument of Hume; and in his "Unreasonableness of Infidelity," Baxter assails his adversary with great ability. It really contains many arguments adopted by later writers without any acknowledgment, and it is still well deserving the attention of those who are again called upon to furnish arguments against misbelievers. The book is divided into four portions. In the first he grapples with the writer's view, that no one is bound to accept the miracles of Christ on the bare testimony of His followers. The subject of the second portion is the internal evidence of the truth of Christianity, in which may be found the germ of a once well known, but now forgotten, work of the saintly Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen. The third part of the treatise, much inferior in ability to the preceding portions, is an attempt to indicate the exact intention of the works wrought by Christ. In the last part he endeavours to show that arrogant reason and perverse pride are the chief causes of infidelity.

The weakness and strength of Baxter are very evident in this work. There are some passages which recall forcibly some of the noblest thoughts of Pascal, and there are also narratives of apparitions which remind us that it is not given to a Baxter or a Pascal to live above the spirit of their own age. If the great Frenchman had his weak and credulous side, so it must be confessed had the author of "The Saint's Rest." The first portion of the treatise will give to those who are in any doubt as to Baxter's intellectual ability, the undoubted impression that when he pleases he can be as clear as Paley, and often as cogent. What he says of the internal evidence of the truth is after all little more than an appeal to the consciousness of the individual believer. Like all expositions of a similar kind, his persuasive enforcements of holiness, and the adaptation of truth to the wants of the soul, will be found more effectual in increasing the satisfaction of those who believe already, than effective in controlling the errors of unbelievers. From this portion of the book many touching illustrations of the deep tenderness of Baxter's nature might be drawn. He writes like one possessed of truth; and it may be said of him, indeed, that an intense desire to recommend the doctrine he loved so dearly to opponents, is everywhere present.

In the works of Owen and Howe there are many passages which show the desire of these two remarkable writers to put forward the "self-evidencing power" of the Bible as a bulwark against temptations to infidelity.

But in moral persuasion, and that peculiar touch of personal interest in his work and object, Baxter certainly stands pre-eminent. The reader is often startled by a sentence which seems exactly fitted to meet a modern objector. But it is true, that after having said many things admirably, he proceeds to dilute the strength of what he has uttered by some amazing words of weakness and credulity. He is not happy in that portion of his work in which he treats of the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost; and there is much of scholastic subtlety in what he says. His whole treatment of the work of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity is strangely wanting in breadth and power. It was this portion of the book, however, which attracted the attention of foreigners, and was translated into German not long after its publication in this country. In the last part of his argument there is a great deal of vigorous writing, but it can hardly be said that its strong denunciations of the pride of intellect are altogether effective. It is not unlikely that he had some of the more resolute spirits who crossed his path when he was labouring at Kidderminster, in his eye, when he penned particular passages.

A special interest attaches to the work which he published, in order to supply the defects of his former treatise, in 1667. This book is called "The Reasons of the Christian Religion." In writing this book, he assigns as a reason his desire to promote the "conversion of idolaters and infidels" to God^m and to the

Christian faith. This is another proof of the spirit in which he regarded the condition of the heathen world. He was the friend of Robert Boyle, and he seems to have caught something of the noble temper which induced that remarkable man, not only to forward every good design for the propagation of the faith, but to endow the lecture which has on the whole proved itself to be a real aid to Christian evidence. But, indeed, Baxter had from early years entertained many various and deep thoughts regarding the slender conquests made by the Christian faith among heathens and Mahometans. These feelings are expressed, not only in his correspondence with Eliot, but in many other places. It can hardly be said that this particular book does much in the way of what he calls "the highest part of his design"; but the spirit which breathes in the dedication is noble and pure, and is interesting as affording true insight into his character. In the work itself there is an admirable account of natural religion, as the idea presented itself to men's minds in Baxter's days; and he shows throughout the treatise remarkable and varied learning.

Some writers have placed the second part of this book among the best statements of the positive grounds of revelation. Indeed, when we consider the great delicacy of the task which he proposes to himself, it is difficult to praise portions of this division of the book too highly. The first describes the congruity of the revelation regarding God made in the Bible, with the

conceptions man frames of the Almighty, from his unassisted reason, and then proceeds to give an account of the "witness of Jesus Christ as the demonstrative evidence of his verity and authority." In this part of the work he discusses the witness of prophecy—the character of Christ—the miracles, and those of the apostles—and finally, the living evidence given in the perpetual manifestation of power in the salvation of souls. The particular arrangement of this book will probably repel some readers. It abounds, however, in passages of real beauty. Nothing can be more touching than the following passage, taken from the earlier portion of the second part :—

"As the impress on the wax doth make the image more discernible than the sculpture on the seal ; but the sculpture is true and perfect, when many accidents may render the impressed image imperfect and faulty ; so is it in this case. To a diligent inquirer, Christianity is best known in its principles delivered by Christ, the author of it ; and, indeed, is no otherwise perfectly known, because it is nowhere else perfectly to be seen. But yet it is much more visible and taking with unskilful, superficial observers, in the professors lives ; for they can discern the good or evil of an action, who perceive not the nature of the rule and precepts. The vital form in the rose-tree is the most excellent part ; but the beauty and sweetness of the rose is more easily discerned. Effects are most sensible, but causes are most excellent ; and yet in some

respects the practice of religion is more excellent than the precepts, inasmuch as the precepts are means to practice ; for the end is more excellent than the means as such. A poor man can more easily perceive the worth of charity in the person that clotheth and feedeth and relieveth him, than the worth of a treatise or sermon of charity. Subjects easily perceive the worth of a wise, and holy, and just, and merciful king or magistrate in his actual government, who are not much taken with the precepts which require yet more perfection ; and among all descriptions, historical narratives, like Xenophon's 'Cyrus,' do take most with them. Doubtless, if ever the professors of Christianity should live according to their own profession, they would thereby overcome the opposition of the world, and propagate their religion with the greatest success through all the earth."

Those who have been accustomed to look upon Baxter as a latitudinarian, will be much surprised to find that in his account of the doctrine of the Trinity, contained in this book, he pursues his argument in strict accordance with the method of the Athanasian Creed. He is careful, however, to distinguish between the distinctions which were made necessary in the course of controversy, and the original statements of Scripture. His statements regarding the occasional character of the books of the Bible, and the general question of inspiration, are studiously moderate. He shrinks from assigning an absolute infallibility to the Bible, although he pronounces clearly his belief that everything essential to

salvation is contained in Scripture. If the "Reasons of the Christian Religion" are compared with the statements made in the review of his life, no greater inconsistency will be found than that which is constantly perceptible in the writings of any fair-minded man who desires to increase his knowledge, and infuse charity into every utterance of opinion. The beautiful conclusion of Baxter's address to the Holy Spirit is well worth quoting :—

"As Thou art the Agent and Advocate of Jesus, my Lord, oh plead His cause effectually in my soul against the suggestions of Satan and my unbelief; and finish His healing, saving work, and let not the flesh or world prevail. Be in me the resident witness of my Lord, the author of my prayers, the spirit of adoption, the seal of God, and the earnest of mine inheritance. Let not the nights be so long, and my days so short, nor sin eclipse those beams which have often illuminated my soul. Without these, books are senseless scrawls, studies are dreams, learning is a glow-worm, and wit is but wantonness, impertinence, and folly. Transcribe those sacred precepts on my heart, which by Thy dictates and aspirations are recorded in Thy holy word. I refuse not Thy help for tears and groans; but oh, shed abroad that love upon my heart, which may keep it in a continual life of love. Teach me the work which I must do in heaven; refresh my soul with the delights of holiness, and the joys which arise from the believing hopes of the everlasting joys. Exercise my heart and tongue in the holy

praises of my Lord. Strengthen me in sufferings ; and conquer the terrors of death and hell. Make me the more heavenly, by how much the faster I am hastening to heaven ; and let my last thoughts, words, and works on earth, be likest to those which shall be my first in the state of glorious immortality ; where the kingdom is delivered up to the Father, and God will for ever be all, and in all ; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

There was another supplement to this work, published in 1672. In the first part Baxter vindicates the Scriptures against the charges of an anonymous writer, and in the second he deals with the work of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the first deistical writer who attracted notice. Baxter rarely appears to such advantage as in the tender and delicate dedication of this little book. He speaks with strong emotion of the "sweet gust and fervent, ascendant, holy love," that breathed in George Herbert's poems, the brother of the author and of the Sir Henry Herbert to whom he writes. There is a beautiful allusion to his own personal condition, in the forcible appeal he makes to Lord Herbert. And with this passage we must conclude the account of Baxter's writings upon Evidence. After having admitted that there are many instances of unworthy pastors, he vindicates the lives and labours of his brethren ; and does not scruple to refer in modest terms to his own circumstances and condition :—

"And as for will and interest, it is notorious that

thousands of the ministry have so little set by worldly interest, as that it is upon the terms of greatest self-denial to the flesh that they take up and exercise their office, being moved only by the great interest of their own and other's souls ; their voluntary, diligent labours, their holy lives, their contempt of the world, may convince any of this that are not blinded by prejudice or malice. There are few learned men in the reformed churches but might far better use their studies and labours, if they took that for best which is most profitable, advancing, or pleasing to the flock. You had a brother of your own, so holy a man, as his sincerity was past exception, and so zealous in his sacred ministry, as showed he did not dissemble ; and, I suppose, had it been necessary, you would have so maintained him, that he should not have fled from truth for fear of poverty. What can you think of all those that gave up their lives for the Christian faith and hope ? Did they go upon such carnal grounds as you maintain ? The revolution of states, and the diversity of sentiments, and especially the interests of the carnal part, do bring it to pass, by God's over-ruling of all, that usually the most serious Christians and pastors are the sufferers of the age they live in ; so that how much hath God done hereby, to confute such suspicions and accusations ! There are now in England learned and worthy men, in church preferments, which doubtless do not so love them, as to buy them with the loss of truth, and that to keep up a religion against their consciences. But if you did so

accuse them, surely the many hundred silenced ministers now in England, that live in poverty, and many of them want bread, when they might have preferment as well as others, do live out of the reach of this accusation. I write not this at all as meddling with their cause, but as answering your exception. I have myself got no more for preaching the Gospel these nine years than if I had been a layman ; I mean, I have preached for nothing, if the success on men's souls were not something, and God's acceptance, so far as I did preach ; and more than that, I would offer any man my almost oath to satisfy him, that I believe and profess the Christian doctrine for its proper evidence, and for the hopes of the blessedness promised thereby, which, if they prevailed not with me above all the riches, preferments, and pleasures of this world, I would never have been a preacher or a Christian, nor would continue in my calling and profession one day, much less on the self-denying terms, as I now do. But O my Lord, Thou hast been to me a faithful Saviour, a happy Teacher, a supporting Comforter, in my greatest dangers, distress, and fears ; Thy service hath been sweet and good ; Thy word hath been a powerful light, a quickening, a changing, an elevating, a guiding, a comforting word. So far am I from repenting that I am Thy disciple, or Thy servant, that, now I am not far from my departure from this world, I do vehemently protest, that I beg no greater mercy of Thee in this world, than that I may believe in Thee more firmly, and hope in Thy promises more con-

fidently, and by Thine intercession receive more of Thy Holy Spirit, by which I may have nearer access to God, and that by Thy blood and merits I may be justified and cleansed from the guilt of all my sins, and that by Thee I may be taught to know the Father, and to love Him as His love and goodness hath manifested itself in Thee, and in the gracious work of man's redemption; that Thou wilt be the undertaker for my soul and body through my life, and that at death I may commend my spirit into Thy hands, in a strong and well-grounded faith and hope, and come to Thee in the fervent desire of Divine and heavenly love. And I ask for no greater felicity hereafter than to see the glory of the blessed Deity, and live in the perfect knowledge, and love, and praise of God. And I may add, that it is not only clergymen that are Christians; besides them, the most learned men in the world have defended or adhered to the Christian faith. I need not name to you either men of your own rank, such as the two Mirandulas, the great Du Plessis, Mar-nixius de Aldegonde, Anhaltinus, a prince, though a divine, Bacon, and many a worthy nobleman of these kingdoms, and of many others; nor such laymen as the Scaligers, Salmasius, Grotius, Casaubon, Thuanus, and multitudes more. Were all these, *larvati vel palliati*, biassed by price or fleshly interest? He that is not a Christian for spiritual and eternal interest, taking up his cross and following a crucified Christ on terms of self-denial, even to the forsaking of all for Him, not excepting life itself, and doth not by his cross even crucify

the flesh and the world, which is the provision for its lusts, is, indeed, no Christian at all."

There is little to be said about a work on Immortality, published in 1682. The treatise on the "Certainty of the World of Spirits," one of the last of Baxter's publications, is only memorable as containing extraordinary stories of apparitions and prodigies. Here, Baxter was in no way superior to Sir Matthew Hale and Robert Boyle. The long-standing belief in witchcraft is one of the many strange problems in the history of religious thought.

CHAPTER IX.

BAXTER'S TEACHING.

NO good purpose could be served by attempting to deal at length, or in detail, with Baxter's doctrinal writings. His extraordinary acuteness induced him to attempt a revival of formal scholasticism. In his famous "Methodus" he carries this to excess. His speculations on the Divine Trinity or Unity are most subtle and intricate. He saw a threefold unity in all things. As the great Leibnitz saw monadism everywhere, so did Baxter see triadism. The germ of his theological speculations is to be found in his earliest publication on Justification. This led him into elaborate controversies. It must be owned that he frequently allowed himself to be betrayed into statements inconsistent with his professions as a peacemaker. The asperity and peevishness of many of these writings is often relieved by passages of calm and stately dignity. In his "Confession of Faith," published in 1665, where he declares his adherence to the articles of the synod of Dort, there is a passage which presents a favourable specimen of his view of one of the doctrinal questions, which possessed supreme interest for the men of his

generation. It may be taken as almost defining Baxter's position as a doctrinal theologian. Mr. Orme says :—

“As every man ought to be allowed to be the expositor of his own sentiments, let no man after this question or deny the Calvinism of Richard Baxter. He was as much a Calvinist as thousands who then, or who now, bear the name without suspicion. He indeed used language liable to be misunderstood, as do all who are disposed to be too refined or metaphysical on moral subjects. His very efforts at precision in the use of words and phrases involved him in controversy which, by a more general mode of speaking, he would have avoided. He was open and honest; what other men swallowed in a mass, he divided, analysed, and explained, often to a troublesome extent. Yet his very scrupulosity in holding and explaining his sentiments, compels us to respect him; while his supreme regard for the honour of God, the holiness of His government, and the claims of His law, entitles him to our highest approbation. The man who could write the following passage cannot be regarded as holding either narrow or obscure views of the divine moral government, or of the system of redemption which that moral government embraces and develops.

“As is the moon with the stars unto the expanded firmament; as are the well-ordered cities with their ornaments and fortifications to the woods and wilderness—such is the Church to the rest of the world. The felicity of the Church is in the love of God, and its

blessed influence ; whose face is that sun which doth enlighten and enliven it. If earth and sin had not caused a separation and eclipse, the world and the Church would have been the same, and this Church would have enjoyed an uninterrupted daylight. It is the earth that moveth and turneth from this sun, and not the sun's receding from the earth, that brings our night. It is not God, but man, that lost his goodness ; nor is it necessary to our reparation that a change be made on Him, but on us. Christ came not into the world to make God better, but to make us better ; nor did He die to make Him more disposed to do good, but to dispose us to receive it. His purpose was not actually to change the mind of God, nor to incline Him to have mercy who before was disinclined, but to make the pardon of man's sin a thing convenient for the righteous and holy Governor of the world to bestow, without any impeachment of the honour of His wisdom, holiness, or justice ; yea, to the more eminent glorifying of them all. Two things are requisite to make a man amiable in the eyes of God, and a fit object for the Most Holy to take pleasure in : one is his suitableness to the holiness of God's nature ; the other respecteth his governing justice. We must, in this life, see God in the glass of the creature, and especially in a man that beareth His image. Were we holy, He would love us as a holy God ; and were we innocent, He would encourage us as a righteous and bounteous Governor. But as there is no particular governing justice without

that universal natural justice which it pre-supposeth and floweth from, so can there be no such thing as innocency in us as subjects, which floweth not from a holiness of our natures as men. We must be good before we can live as the good. In both these respects man was amiable in the eyes of his Maker, till sin depraved him and deprived him of both. To both these must the Saviour again restore him; and this is the work that He came into the world to do, even to seek and to save that which was doubly lost, and to destroy that twofold work of the devil, which hath drawn us to be both unholy and guilty. As in the fall the natural and real evil was antecedent to the relative guilt; so is it in the good conferred in the reparation. We must, in order of nature, be first turned by repentance unto God, through faith in the Redeemer, and then receive the remission of our sins. As it was man himself that was the subject of that twofold unrighteousness, so it is man himself that must be restored to that twofold righteousness which he lost; that is, sanctity and not-guiltiness. Christ came not to possess God with any false opinion of us, nor is He such a physician as to perform but a supposed or representative cure; He came not to persuade His Father to judge us to be well, because He is well; or to leave us uncured, and to persuade God that we are cured. It is that we were guilty and unholy; it is that we must be justified or condemned, and therefore it is we that must be restored unto righteousness. If Christ only were

righteous, Christ only would be reputed and judged righteous, and Christ only would be happy. The Judge of the world will not justify the unrighteous, merely because another is righteous; nor can the holy God take complacency in an unholy sinner, because another is holy. Never did the blessed Son of God intend, in His dying or merits, to change the holy nature of His Father, and to cause Him to love that which is not lovely, or to reconcile Him to that which He abhorreth, as He is God. We must bear His own image, and be holy as He is holy, before He can approve us, or love us in complacency. This is the work of our blessed Redeemer, to make man fit for God's approbation and delight. Though we are the subjects, He is the cause. He regenerateth us, that He may pardon us; and He pardoneth us, that He may further sanctify us, and make us fit for our Master's use. He will not remove our guilt till we return, nor will he accept our actual services till our guilt be removed. By supernatural operations must both be accomplished: a regress from such a privation as was our unholiness requireth a supernatural work upon us, and a deliverance from such guilt and deserved punishment requireth a supernatural operation for us. The one Christ effecteth in us by His sanctifying Spirit, through the instrumentality of His Word, as informing and exciting; the other He effecteth by His own (and His Father's) will, through the instrumentality of His Gospel grant, by way of donation, making an universal conditional deed

of gift of Himself, and remission and right to glory, to all that return by repentance and faith. His blood is the meritorious cause of both, but not of both on the same account; for directly it was guilt only that made His blood necessary for our recovery. Had there been nothing to do but renew us by repentance and sanctification, this might have been done without any bloodshed, by the work of the word and the Spirit. God at first gave man his image freely, and did not sell it for a price of blood; nor doth He so delight in blood, as to desire it, or accept it for itself, but for the ends which it must, as a convenient means, attain. Those ends are the demonstration, proximately, of His governing justice, in the vindication of the honour of His law and rule, and for the wrong of others; ultimately and principally it is the demonstration of His natural sin-hating holiness, and His unspeakable love to the sons of men, but specially to His elect. In this sense was Christ a sacrifice and ransom, and may be truly said to have satisfied for our sins. He was not a sinner, nor so esteemed, nor could possibly take upon Himself the numerical guilt, which lay on us, nor yet a guilt of the same sort, as having not the same sort of foundation or efficient; ours arising from the merit of our sin and the commination of the law; His being rather occasioned than merited by our sin, and occasioned by the laws threatening of us. He had neither sin of His own, nor merit of wrath from such sin, nor did the law oblige Him to suffer for our sins; but He

obliged Himself to suffer for our sins, though not as in our persons strictly, yet in our stead in the person of a Mediator."

CHAPTER X.

BAXTER'S TEACHING, CONTINUED.

MR. ORME, in his very complete account of the doctrinal works of Baxter, has remarked that the peculiar character of his mind, leading him often into unsuspected concession and intricate refinement, makes the task of any writer who desires to form a true estimate of Baxter as a doctrinal theologian exceedingly difficult. In early life he laid down in his "Aphorisms" many of the principles which he asserted from time to time in his more elaborate works. The book abounds in crude statements and harsh definitions. His account of the grounds of the Christian's title to forgiveness led to immediate controversy, and the general acceptance of the work was undoubtedly hindered by the introduction of some views of a purely speculative character. William Eyre, of Salisbury, attacked the book in a volume to which Owen wrote a preface. A more formidable answer was written by John Crandon. In his memoirs, Baxter speaks of these two writers in somewhat caustic terms. In what he calls "His Apology" there is a formal answer to his opponents. The beautiful conclusion of the dedication to General Whalley must be given in full:—

“The work of these papers has been, to my mind, somewhat like those sad employments wherein I attended you : of themselves grievous and ungrateful, exasperating others and not pleasing ourselves. The remembrance of those years is so little delightful to me, that I look back upon them as the saddest part of my life ; so the review of this apology is but the renewing of my trouble ; to think of our common frailty and darkness, and what reverend and much-valued brethren I contradict ; but especially the fear lest men should make this collision an occasion of derision, and by receiving the sparks into combustible affections, should turn that to a conflagration which I intended but for an illumination. If you say, I should then have let it alone, the same answer must serve as in the former case we were wont to use. Some say that I, who pretend so much for peace, should not write of controversies. For myself it is not much matter ; but must God’s truth stand as a butt for every man to shoot at ? Must there be such liberty of opposing it, and none of defending ? One party cannot have peace without the other’s consent. To be buffeted and assaulted, and commanded to deliver up the truth of God, and called unpeaceable if I defend it and resist, this is such equity as we were wont to find. In a word, both works were ungrateful to me, and are so in the review ; but in both, as Providence and men’s onset imposed a necessity and drove me to that strait, that I must defend or do worse, so did the same Providence clear my way, and draw me on, and sweeten unusual

troubles with unusual mercies, and issue all in testimonies of grace, that as I had great mixtures of comfort with sorrow in the performance, so have I in the review ; and as I had more eminent deliverances, and other mercies, in those years and ways of blood and dolor, than in most of my life besides, so have I had more encouraging light since I was engaged in those controversies. For I speak not of these few papers only, but of many more of the like nature that have taken up my time ; and as I still retained a hope that the end of all our calamities and strange disposings of Providence, would be somewhat better than was threatened of late, so experience hath taught me to think that the issue of my most ungrateful labours shall not be in vain ; but that Providence which extracted them hath some use to make of them better than I am yet aware of ; if not in this age, yet in times to come. The best is, we now draw no blood ; and honest hearts will not feel themselves wounded with that blow which is only given to their errors. However, God must be served when He calls for it, though by the harshest and most displeasing work. Only, the Lord teach us to watch carefully over our deceitful hearts, lest we should serve ourselves while we think and say we are serving Him ; and lest we should militate for our own honour and interest, when we pretend to do it for His truth and glory ! I hope, sir, the diversity of opinions in these days will not diminish your estimation of Christianity, nor make you suspect that all is doubtful because so much is doubted

of. Though the tempter seems to be playing such a game in the world, God will go beyond him, and turn that to illustration and confirmation which he intended for confusion and extirpation of the truth. You know it is no news to hear of men, ignorant, proud, and licentious, of what religion soever they be; this trinity is the creator of heresies. As for the sober and godly, it is but in lesser things that they disagree; and mostly about words and methods more than matter, though the smallest things of God are not contemptible. He that wonders to see wise men differ, doth but wonder that they are yet imperfect, and know but in part; that is, that they are yet mortal sinners, and not glorified on earth! Such wonderers know not what man is, and are too great strangers to themselves. If they turn these differences to the prejudice of God's truth or dishonour of godliness, they show themselves yet more unreasonable than those who blame the sun that men are purblind; and, indeed, were pride and passion laid aside in our disputes, if men could gently suffer contradiction and heartily love and correspond with those that in lower matters do gainsay them, I see not but such friendly debates might edify. For yourself, sir, as you were a friend to sound doctrine, to unity, and to piety, and to the preachers, defenders, and practisers thereof, while I conversed with you, and as fame informeth us, have continued such, so I hope that God, who hath so long preserved you, will preserve you to the end; and He that hath been your shield in corporal dangers will be so in spiritual. Your great

warfare is not yet accomplished ; the worms of corruption that breed in us will live, in some measure, till we die ourselves. Your conquest of yourself is yet imperfect. To fight with yourself you will find the hardest but most necessary conflict that ever yet you were engaged in, and to overcome yourself the most honourable and gainful victory. Think not that your greatest trials are all over. Prosperity hath its peculiar temptations, by which it hath foiled many that stood unshaken in the storms of adversity. The tempter, who hath had you on the waves, will now assault you in the calm, and hath his last game to play on the mountain, till nature cause you to descend. Stand this charge, and you win the day."

The career of Whalley, who was one of the judges, is recorded by Southey in the *Quarterly Review*. Before the Restoration he escaped to America, and was for many years in concealment near the town of Hadley. There he died in 1688. Baxter published his "Confession of Faith" in 1655. It is from this treatise that some hardly justifiable inferences as to his theological position have been drawn. His extreme anxiety to do justice to both sides led some to claim him as a thorough-going Arminian, while there were others who were anxious to place him in the Calvinist camp. It would serve no good purpose even to attempt to disentangle these intricate questions. He was evidently sensitive on the subject of his orthodoxy, and in one or two of the occasional publications, which he sent forth in 1672 and some following years, he constantly recurs to the defini-

tions contained in the Protestant confessions, and declares his adherence to their expositions of doctrine. A folio volume of seven hundred pages appeared in 1675, with an astonishingly long title. It was upon Catholic theology, and in the preface there are some words of a touchingly personal character, which express very forcibly the temper and quality of what is perhaps the most extraordinary of all his writings :—

“My mind being these years immersed in studies of this nature, and having also long wearied myself in searching what fathers and schoolmen have said of such things before us, and my genius abhorring confusions and equivocals, I came, by many years' longer study, to perceive that most of the doctrinal controversies among Protestants are far more about equivocal words than matter; and it wounded my soul to perceive what work, both tyrannical and unskilful disputing clergymen had made these thirteen hundred years in the world! Experience, since the yera 1643, till this year 1675, hath loudly called me to repent of my own prejudices, sidings, and censurings of causes and persons not understood, and of all the miscarriages of my ministry and life, which have been thereby caused, and to make it my chief work to call men that are within my hearing to more peaceable thoughts, affections, and practices. And my endeavours have not been in vain, in that the ministers of the county where I lived were very many of such a peaceable temper, and a great number more through the land, by God's grace (rather than any

endeavours of mine), are so minded. But the sons of the cowl were exasperated the more against me, and accounted him to be against every man that called all men to love and peace, and was for no man as in a contrary way. And now looking daily in this posture, when God calleth me hence, summoned by an incurable disease to hasten all that ever I will do in this world; being incapable of prevailing with the present Church disturbers, I do apply myself to posterity, leaving them the sad warning of their ancestors' distractions, as a pillar of salt, and acquainting them what I have found to be the cause of our calamities, and therein they will find the cure themselves."

The extent of reading, and the remarkable subtlety of the author's mind, must strike every reader who attempts to make acquaintance with the contents of this volume. Occasionally he astonishes us with a passage of terse and aphoristic brevity, and it must be added not very seldom displays astounding powers of prolixity, especially when dealing with metaphysicians to whom he is opposed. Those who make the experiment will find here, as in all Baxter's writings, an undercurrent of the truest piety. A real love for his Saviour, as a personal friend with whom he took sweet counsel, is constantly and most touchingly manifested. Never was there a theologian who realized more completely the intense effect which a grasp of truth is intended to produce on the mind and the affections. Some will be reminded of the most glowing passages in the works of Anselm,

and will hardly assign an inferior place to Baxter, if a comparison can be fairly made between the great representative of mediæval theology and the austere preacher of a restless and perplexed age.

The only Latin work written by Baxter was the "*Methodus Theologiæ Christianæ.*" It appeared in 1681, and had been the occupation of many years. In nature and morality he saw the principle of a Divine Trinity or Unity. He revels in speculation. Much of the book is fanciful and extravagant, but justice has never been done to the metaphysical ability contained in many of its pages. Dean Mansel, whose judgment upon such a subject is unquestionable, rated the ability of Baxter in this book very highly. In the year 1691 Baxter published "*An End of Doctrinal Controversies which have lately troubled the Churches, by Reconciling Explanation without much Disputing.*" The book is interesting as containing his last words on justification, good works, merit, and perseverance. But he does not add much to what he had already said upon these subjects. The conclusion of the preface is a sincere expression of his feeling on the subject of peace: "The glorious light will soon end all our controversies, and reconcile these who by unfeigned faith and love are united in the Prince of Peace, or Head, by love dwelling in God, and God in them. But false-hearted, malignant, carnal worldlings, that live in the fear of wrath and strife, will find, so dying, the woeful maturity of their

enmity to holy unity, love, and peace; and that the causeless shutting the true servants of Christ out of their churches, which should be the porch of heaven, is the way to be themselves shut out of the heavenly Jerusalem. If those that have long reproached me as unfit to be in their church, and said *Ex uno disce omnes*, with their leader, find any unsound or unprofitable doctrine here, I shall take it for a great favour to be confuted, even for the good of others excluded with me, when I am dead."

A review of Baxter's doctrinal writings will, it is thought, lead many to a far higher estimate of his power as a theologian than that which has been commonly held. The truth is, that his intense vigour in the practical treatment of the Christian life has obscured his fame as a doctrinal theologian. An admirable volume of selections might be made from the great folios which now lie undisturbed in the recesses of libraries; and passages, equal to any to be found in the works of Hooker and Bull, might be chosen to illustrate his profound appreciation of the real characteristics of Christian theology.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRACTICAL TEACHER.

BA^XTER appears as a casuist in the Directory which forms the first volume of the original edition of his practical works. It is a book of mental and moral anatomy. He surveys the field of private duty, economics, or family duties, and touches on Church order and politics. It is in all respects modelled according to the fashion of the regular writers upon casuistry, and simply exhibits in detail the astonishing fashion for dissecting human life, so characteristic of the seventeenth century. Calvin at Geneva had attempted to map out and order human duty with a rigour entirely impossible under the ordinary conditions of society. The same spirit appears in the thorough-going casuists of the Church of Rome. Baxter was not a whit behind in his effort to subdue and control human nature. He would have had, if he had been permitted, an almost martial law in every parish, and cases of conscience would have been determined like actions about petty thefts. His notions as to the liberty of the subject were as narrow and constrained as those of the Jesuits ; and it is impossible to read pages of the Directory without

perceiving that he would have gone as far, in the doctrine of divine right and passive obedience, as Filmer himself.

It is pleasant to pass from the exaggerated details of a work such as this, to the practical theology which still preserves Baxter's name. In this department he stands almost alone. Others before him have dealt with exposition and practical teaching, but it is difficult to find before Baxter's time any writings which spoke so directly to the conscience as "The Call to the Unconverted," and the various smaller treatises still dear to the lovers of fervent and persuasive exhortations.

Mr. Orme has well said, "that Baxter's severity never partakes of the nature of misanthropy. He never seems to take pleasure in wounding. He employs the knife with an unsparing hand; but that hand always appears to be guided by a tender, sympathizing heart." These words exactly express the peculiar distinction of Baxter's practical teaching. His pages seem to glow with the love for souls which even his bitterest enemies were ready to declare that he possessed. An admirable instance of this spirit is contained in the dedication of his treatise of Conversion, to the inhabitants of the borough and foreign of Kidderminster. One sentence may be quoted; as it fully expresses the desire of his heart: "I have earnestly besought you, and begged of you to return, and if I had tears at command, I should have mixed all these exhortations with my tears; and if I had but time and strength (as I have not), I should

have made bold to have come once more to you, and sit with you in your houses, and entreated you on the behalf of your souls, even twenty times for once that I have entreated you."

In this book there is a remarkable apology for the plainness and simplicity of his style. Compliments, he says, are not needed, "when we run to quench a common fire;" and again, "If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands upon him as we can, without delay."

It was at Archbishop Usher's request that Baxter wrote upon the subject of Conversion. He mentions this in his preface to the famous "Call to the Unconverted." Admirable as much of this well-known book is, it does not possess the intense fervour of a tract, called "Now or Never;" by far the best specimen of Baxter's most impassioned manner.

"The Call," however, has enjoyed an extraordinary popularity. There is nothing to equal the remarkable knowledge of character shown in the caustic portraits of William Law; but there is often in Baxter's pages an evidence of real knowledge of the human heart, and a power of dissecting motives only to be found in the writings of those who had real acquaintance with the excuses men often make for themselves in the province of religious life. It has been said that Baxter undervalues the power of the will, and is too apt to regard the work of conversion as entirely proceeding from God. It must be remembered, however, that he often had in his

mind the dry didactic treatises of his age, some written by Puritans, and some by very different persons, in which the cultivation of the religious affections was often treated in a dry and mechanical fashion.

“The Mischiefs of Self-ignorance, and the Benefits of Self-acquaintance,” opened in divers sermons at St. Dunstan’s, is a very pleasing specimen of Baxter’s practical writings. It is interesting, also, as giving us a glimpse of Baxter’s relations with some great people. The book is dedicated to the Countess of Balcarras, whose life forms the subject of an interesting monograph by the late Lord Crawford. We give Baxter’s own account of the lady :—

“She was daughter to the late Earl of Seaforth, in Scotland, towards the Highlands, and was married to the Earl of Balcarras, a Covenanter, but an enemy to Cromwell’s perfidiousness, and true to the person and authority of the king. With the Earl of Glencarne, he kept up the late war for the king against Cromwell; and his lady, through dearness of affection, marched with him, and lay out of doors with him on the mountains. At last Cromwell drove them out of Scotland, and they went together beyond sea to the king, whom they long followed. He was taken for the head of the Presbyterians with the king; but, by evil instruments, he fell out with the Lord Chancellor, who, prevailing against him upon some advantage, he was for a time forbidden the Court; the grief whereof, added to the distempers he had contracted by his warfare on the

cold and hungry mountains, cast him into a consumption, of which he died. He was a lord of excellent learning, judgment, and honesty, none being praised equally with him for learning and understanding in all Scotland. When the Earl of Lauderdale (his near kinsman and great friend) was prisoner in Portsmouth and Windsor Castle, he fell into acquaintance with my books, and so valued them that he read them all, and took notes of them, and earnestly commended them to the Earl of Balcarras then with the king. The earl met, at the first sight, with some passages where he thought I spoke too favourably of the Papists, and differed from many other Protestants; so he cast them by, and sent the reason of his distaste to the Earl of Lauderdale, who pressed him but to read one of the books over; which he did, and then read them all (as I have seen many of them marked with his hand), and was drawn to over-value them more than the Earl of Lauderdale. Thereupon his lady reading them also, and being a woman of very strong love and friendship, with extraordinary entireness swallowed up in her husband's love, she, for the book's sake, and her husband's sake, became a most affectionate friend to me, before she ever saw me. While she was in France, being zealous for the king's restoration (in whose cause her husband had pawned and ruined his estate), by the Earl of Lauderdale's direction, she, with Sir Robert Murray, got divers letters from the pastors and others there to bear witness of the king's sincerity in the Protestant religion; among which there

was one to me from Mr. Gaches. Her great wisdom, modesty, piety, and sincerity, made her accounted the saint at Court. When she came over with the king, her extraordinary respect obliged me to be so often with her as gave me acquaintance with her eminency in all the foresaid virtues. She was of solid understanding for her sex, of prudence much more than ordinary; of great integrity and constancy in her religion; a great hater of hypocrisy; and faithful to Christ in an unfaithful world. She was somewhat over-affectionate to her friends, which hath cost her a great deal of sorrow in the loss of her husband, and since of other special friends; and may cost her more, when the rest forsake her, as many in prosperity do to those that will not forsake their fidelity to Christ. Her eldest son, the young Earl of Balcarras, a very hopeful youth, died of a strange disease; two stones being found in his heart, of which one was very great. Being my constant auditor, and over-respectful friend, I had occasion for the just praises and acknowledgments which I have given her; which the occasioning of these books hath caused me to mention."

The Countess Anna was no ordinary person. In an age of disquiet she enjoyed the friendship of many eminent people, who espoused different sides in the great contest of the time. When her daughter joined the Church of Rome, we find her consulting Bishop Gunning, and afterwards Baxter, who wrote a letter upon the subject tinged with some asperity. Her feeling for Baxter was most affectionate. "Mr Baxter's picture" occupied an

honourable place on her walls, and when she had married her second husband, the unfortunate Earl of Argyll, she continued to maintain friendly relations with many of the divines of the period. Lord Crawford's words are well worth quoting: "Her sympathy was, like the Apostle's, with all who loved the Lord Jesus with sincerity. If Baxter was her personal friend in one direction, Dr. Earles, the excellent Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Salisbury—whose 'innocent wisdom,' 'sanctified learning,' and 'pious, peaceable temper,' are the theme of Isaac Walton's eulogy—was, as we have seen, her 'old kind friend,' on the other; and if the 'Divine Life,' and 'Saint's Rest,' were dear to her alike from their subject and their author, the writings of Robert Boyle and Isaac Barrow were equally objects of her admiring familiarity. Nothing indeed is more remarkable than the mutual understanding and cordiality, and even the affection, which we constantly find to have subsisted in those days between individuals belonging to parties in Church and State which we are accustomed in the retrospect to consider as at deadly enmity. As partisans, doubtless, they would have fought *à l'outrance* when arrayed in the opposing ranks of polemical or political controversy; but in their individual relations, in the intercourse of life, they seem to have thought more of the points of agreement than those of difference, and found those points a sufficient basis for a common and kindly understanding."

It is worth remembering that the generous catholicity

of spirits, so evident in the account of Baxter's relations with Sir Matthew Hale and Robert Boyle, was not only the characteristic of his later days, but may be said to be a governing principle, even in the troubled times of his earlier life, when, like Falkland, in the midst of trouble he sighed for peace.

When we consider the extraordinary personal labours of Baxter, in the days of his pastoral activity, the mere catalogue of his various works is most astonishing. He wrote on the advancement of the spiritual life again and again. His "Method for Settled Peace of Conscience, and Spiritual Comfort," was suggested by his experience at Kidderminster. It was dedicated to Colonel and Mrs. Bridges, and Mr. and Mrs. Foley, wealthy members of his flock. Colonel Bridges, indeed, was the patron of the living. Dr. Hammond, he tells us, was pleased with the book.

From an assize sermon preached at Worcester, we derive one of the most remarkable passages of Baxter's hortatory style. Often as this life has been likened to a stage and its actors, it has been seldom more tersely described than in the following words: "It is but like children's games, where all is done in jest, and which wise men account not worthy their observance. It is but like the acting of a comedy, while great persons and actions are personated and counterfeited; and a pompous stir there is for a while, to please the foolish spectators, that themselves may be pleased by their applause, and then they come down and the sport is ended, and they

are as they were. It is but like a puppet play, where there is great doings to little purpose ; or like the busy gadding of the laborious ants, to gather together a little sticks and straw, which the spurn of man's foot will soon disperse."

The last quotation, illustrative of Baxter's powers as a preacher, which we shall make, is also taken from this remarkable sermon :—

"Honourable, worshipful, and all well-beloved, it is a weighty employment that occasioneth your meeting here to-day. The estates and lives of men are in your hands. But it is another kind of judgment which you are all hastening towards : where judges and juries, the accusers and accused, must all appear upon equal terms, for the final decision of a far greater cause. The case that is to be there and then determined, is not whether you shall have lands or no lands, life or no life (in our natural sense), but whether you shall have heaven or hell, salvation or damnation, an endless life of glory with God and the Redeemer, and the angels of heaven, or an endless life of torment with devils and ungodly men. As sure as you now sit on those seats, you shall shortly all appear before the Judge of all the world, and there receive an irreversible sentence, to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery. This is the great business that should presently call up your most serious thoughts, and set all the powers of your souls on work for the most effectual preparation ; that if you are men, you may quit yourselves like men, for the prevent-

ing of that dreadful doom which unprepared souls must then expect. The greatest of your secular affairs are but dreams and toys to this. Were you at every assize to determine causes of no lower value than the crowns and kingdoms of the monarchs of the earth, it were but as children's games to this. If any man of you believe not this, he is worse than the devil that tempteth him to unbelief; and let him know that unbelief is no prevention, nor will put off the day, or hinder his appearance, but ascertain his condemnation at that appearance. He that knows the law and the fact may know before your assize what will become of every prisoner, if the proceedings be all just, as in our case they will certainly be. Christ will judge according to His laws; know, therefore, whom the law condemneth or justifieth, and you may know whom Christ will condemn or justify. And seeing all this is so, doth it not concern us all to make a speedy trial of ourselves in preparation to this final trial?

“I shall for your own sakes, therefore, take the boldness, as the officer of Christ, to summon you to appear before yourselves, and keep an assize this day in your own souls, and answer at the bar of conscience, to what shall be charged upon you. Fear not the trial; for it is not conclusive, final, or a peremptory, irreversible sentence that must now pass. Yet slight it not; for it is a necessary preparative to that which is final and irreversible. Consequentially it may prove a justifying accusation, an absolving condemnation, and if you

proceed to execution, a saving, quickening death, which I am now persuading you to undergo.

“The whole world is divided into two sorts of men : one that love God above all, and live for Him ; and the other that love the flesh and world above all, and live to them. One that seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ; another that seek first the things of this life. One that mind and savour the things of the flesh and of man, the other that mind and savour most the things of the Spirit and of God. One that account all things dung and dross that they may win Christ ; another that make light of Christ in comparison of their business and riches and pleasures in the world. One that live by sight and sense upon present things ; another that live by faith upon things invisible. One that have their conversation in heaven, and live as strangers upon earth ; another that mind earthly things, and are strangers to heaven. One that have in resolution forsaken all for Christ, and the hopes of a treasure in heaven ; another that resolve to keep somewhat here, though they venture and forsake the heavenly reward, and will go away sorrowful that they cannot have both. One that being born of the flesh is but flesh ; the other that being born of the Spirit is spirit. One that live as without God in the world ; the other that live as without the seducing world in God, and in and by the subservient world to God. One that have ordinances and means of grace, as if they had none ; the other that have houses, lands, wives, as if they had none. One that believe as if they believed

not, and love God as if they loved Him not, and pray as if they prayed not, as if the fruit of these were but a shadow ; the other that weep as if they wept not, for worldly things, and rejoice as if they rejoiced not. One that have Christ as not possessing Him, and use Him and His name as but abusing them ; the other that buy as if they possessed not, and use the world as, not abusing it. One that draw near to God with their lips, when their hearts are far from Him ; the other that corporally converse with the world, when their hearts are far from it. One that serve God who is a Spirit, with carnal service, and not in spirit and in truth ; the other that use the world itself spiritually, and not in a carnal, worldly manner. In a word, one sort are children of this world ; the other are the children of the world to come, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom. One sort have their portion in this life ; and the other have God for their portion. One sort have their good things in this lifetime, and their reward here ; the other have their evil things in this life, and live in hope of the everlasting reward."

In the treatise on Self-denial there are many evidences of the effect produced on Baxter's mind by the multiplication of jangling sects. He cannot see any remedy for the miserable dissensions which were separating brethren in the faith, and he betrays in many pages his discontent and uneasiness. In "The Life of Faith," dedicated to the son of John Hampden, we have the substance of the celebrated sermon of three hours,

preached before the king, and it must be confessed that the monarch might well have been excused for the expressions he is said to have used. The sermon is tiresome and utterly unsuitable for the occasion.

It is impossible to give any detailed account of the various efforts made by Baxter to restore peace to Christendom. Like many writers who have devised schemes of comprehension, he made no allowance for the prejudices and prepossessions of men. He forgot that there are very few in any age who really desire to discover what are the true and essential doctrines of the Faith, and that men are for the most part too much occupied with the petty controversies of the hour to devote attention to that which is really permanent in Christianity. With Stillingfleet, who had written in the earlier part of his life an *Irenicum* conceding much to Nonconformist feeling, Baxter had a long and protracted controversy. Stillingfleet, as is well known, departed from the comprehensive attitude of his earlier work; and the publication of his "*Mischief of Separation*," in 1680, was the signal for a general debate upon the subject of Church government. Many painful things were said and done in the course of this controversy, but those who have time to devote attention to it will be surprised to find indirect statements of Baxter maintaining many of the positions advanced by Hooker in his defence of the peculiar attitude of the Church of England.

Some mention must be made of Baxter's efforts in poetry. James Montgomery, no mean critic, has de-

scribed the volume of poetical fragments as “inestimable for its piety, and far above mediocrity in many passages of its poetry.” The volume was first published in 1681, and the title expresses its contents well: “The Concordant Discord of a Broken, Healed Heart; sorrowing, rejoicing, fearing, hoping, living, dying.” The following extract, in which he describes the character of the book, is a touching commentary on Baxter’s married life:—

“These poetical fragments,” he says, “except three heretofore printed, were so far from being intended for the press, that they were not allowed the sight of many private friends, nor thought worthy of it; only, had I had time and heart to have finished the first, which itself, according to the nature and designed method, would have made a volume far bigger than all this, being intended as a thankful historical commemoration of all the notable passages of my life, I should have published it as the most self-pleasing part of my writings. But, as they were mostly written in various passions, so passion hath now thrust them out into the world. God, having taken away the dear companion of the last nineteen years of my life, as her sorrows and sufferings long ago gave being to some of these poems, for reasons which the world is not concerned to know; so my grief for her removal, and the revived sense of former things, have prevailed with me to be passionate in the open sight of all.”

Some years afterwards he published additions to the

fragments, and after his death Sylvester gave to the world a paraphrase of the Psalms. Interest always attaches to the poetical efforts of prose writers. In many of the voluminous writings of Baxter we come upon passages of pathos and expression, which would lead us to suppose that in rhyme and metre he would be far from deficient. But the truth is, that Baxter's poetical works bear tokens of the influence of Herbert and Donne, and are often cramped and full of conceits. A dialogue between "Death and a Believer" is a striking instance of the influence of Donne. The dialogue between "Flesh and Spirit" is more happy. Our first extract shall be taken from "The Resolution."

"As for my friends, they are not lost :
 The several vessels of thy fleet,
 Though parted now by tempests tost,
 Shall safely in the haven meet.
 Still we are centred all in Thee ;
 Members, though distant, of one head,
 In the same family we be,
 By the same faith and Spirit led.
 Before the throne we daily meet,
 As joint petitioners to Thee ;
 In spirit we each other greet,
 And shall again each other see.
 The heavenly hosts, world without end,
 Shall be my company above ;
 And Thou, my best, my surest Friend,
 Who shall divide me from Thy love ? "

There is a singular beauty of a severe and chastened character in "The Valediction." Archbishop Trench

has given it a place in his choice "Household Book of English Poetry." All who do not know it already will be glad to make acquaintance with its solemn strain. The grandeur of the opening portion cannot be said to be sustained throughout the poem, but the whole piece possesses a charm which belongs to some of the severer strains of old religious music :—

“ Vain world, what is in thee ?
 What do poor mortals see,
 Which should esteemèd be
 Worthy their pleasure ?
 Is it the mother's womb,
 Or sorrows which soon come,
 Or a dark grave and tomb,
 Which is their treasure ?
 How dost thou man deceive
 By thy vain glory ?
 Why do they still believe
 Thy false history ?

Is it children's book and rod,
 The labourer's heavy load,
 Poverty undertrod,
 The world desireth ?
 Is it distracting cares,
 Or heart-tormenting fears,
 Or pining grief and tears,
 Which man requireth ?
 Or is it youthful rage,
 Or childish toying ;
 Or is decrepit age
 Worth man's enjoying ?

Is it deceitful wealth,
 Got by care, fraud, or stealth,

Or short, uncertain health,
 Which thus befool men ?
 Or do the serpent's lies
 By the world's flatteries
 And tempting vanities
 Still overrule them ?
 Or do they in a dream
 Sleep out their season ?
 Or borne down by lust's stream,
 Which conquers reason ?

The silly lambs to-day
 Pleasantly skip and play,
 Whom butchers mean to slay
 Perhaps to-morrow ;
 In a more brutish sort
 Do careless sinners sport,
 Or in dead sleep still snort
 As near to sorrow ;
 Till life, not well begun,
 Be sadly ended,
 And the web they have spun
 Can ne'er be mended.

What is the time that's gone,
 And what is that to come ?
 Is it now as none ?
 The present stays not.
 Time posteth, oh how fast !
 Unwelcome death makes haste ;
 None can call back what's past—
 Judgment delays not.
 Though God bring in the light,
 Sinners awake not ;
 Because hell's out of sight
 They sin forsake not.

Man walks in a vain show ;
 They know, yet will not know ;
 Sit still, when they should go ;
 But run for shadows ;
 While they might taste and know
 The living streams that flow,
 And crop the flowers that grow
 In Christ's sweet meadows.
 Life's better slept away
 Than as they use it ;
 In sin and drunken play
 Vain men abuse it.

Malignant world, adieu !
 Where no foul vice is new—
 Only to Satan true,
 God still offended ;
 Though taught and warned by God,
 And His chastising rod,
 Keeps still the way that's broad,
 Never amended.
 Baptismal vows some make,
 But ne'er perform them ;
 If angels from heaven spake,
 'Twould not reform them.

They dig for hell beneath,
 They labour hard for death,
 Run themselves out of breath
 To overtake it.
 Hell is not had for nought,
 Damnation's dearly bought,
 And with great labour sought ;
 They'll not forsake it.

Their souls are Satan's fee—
 He'll not abate it ;
 Grace is refused that's free,
 Mad sinners hate it.

Is this the world men choose,
 For which they heaven refuse,
 And Christ and grace abuse,
 And not receive it ?
 Shall I not guilty be
 Of this in some degree,
 If hence God would me free,
 And I'd not have it ?
 My soul, from Sodom fly,
 Lest wrath there find thee ;
 Thy refuge-rest is nigh ;
 Look not behind thee !

There's none of this ado,
 None of the hellish crew.
 God's promise is most true,
 Boldly believe it.
 My friends are gone before,
 And I am near the shore ;
 My soul stands at the door,
 O Lord, receive it !
 It trusts Christ and His merits,
 The dead He raises ;
 Join it with blessed spirits,
 Who sing Thy praises."

In the lives of saintly men and women nothing is more remarkable than the combination so often found of a deep and almost oppressive sense of sin with an intense realization of true joy. Again and again do we

find in Baxter's writings instances of this strange but not unnatural union. It may seem far-fetched to compare Baxter once more with St. Anselm, perhaps the most attractive figure in early English Church history. But those who are acquainted with the meditations and letters of that great man, will often be struck with the similarity of thought, and even sometimes of expression. The great mediæval Churchman, who has impressed upon at least one great doctrine of the faith the dogmatic character of his intellect, was fully alive to all the sweeter influences of life, had an eye for nature in her sweetest moods, loved the common things of beauty, and the songs of birds. With him these things dwelt, and gave interest and life to the gloom of the cloister and the turmoil of political strife. Baxter, too, in his poetry, and in various passages of his prose writings, felt these influences to be a part of the life of the soul. His highest aspiration went, to use the phrase of his time, God-ward. As he expresses himself nobly in "The Saint's Rest": "As the lark sings sweetly while she soars on high, but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth, so is the frame of the soul most delightful and divine while it keepeth God in view by contemplation. But, alas! we make there too short a stay, and lay by our music."

CHAPTER XII.

THE REAL PLACE OF BAXTER.

I N an age of haste and unrest, it is almost necessary to state distinctly the reasons for assigning a high place to Baxter among men worth remembering. Barrow certainly uttered a high encomium when he said that his practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted. The opinion of Doddridge is also well known. He particularly dwells on the effect of the "Reformed Pastor" on the spirit of men devoted to the ministry. Baxter, he declares, was his particular favourite: "It is impossible to tell you how much I am charmed with the devotion, good sense, and pathos which is everywhere to be found in him." Few utterances as to Baxter's writings excel the saying of Dr. Bates, that "there is a vigorous pulse in them that keeps the reader awake and attentive." He was a favourite of Addison; and Johnson's rather too indulgent reply to Boswell's question what works of Baxter he should read, "Read any of them, for they are all good," is well known. William Wilberforce, who to his many virtues and accomplishments added a fine critical taste, admired and loved Baxter as one of the greatest

of practical divines. Mr. Hunt, in our own day, has well said that he represented the spirit of his century more than any other single man, both in its weakness and its strength. The leading characteristic of his life and his writings is his perfect veracity. About this there can be no possible mistake. It inspired his earliest and his latest effusions. He had a consuming desire to attain truth. His words upon this subject might almost form mottoes for works devoted to the acquisition of science in any of its departments.

Dean Stanley, in his admirable address, delivered in the scene of Baxter's labours, has selected some sentences scattered through Baxter's writings. If they stood alone, as all that remained to tell us what Baxter really was, they are sufficient to justify the very warmest eulogy of the most ardent disciple. He says, "He that can see God in all things, and hath all his life sanctified by the love of God, will above all men value each particle of knowledge of which such holy use may be made, as we value every grain of gold." "Every degree of knowledge tendeth to more, and every known truth befriendeth others, and like fire tendeth to the spreading of our knowledge to all neighbour truths that are intelligible." "Look to all things, or to as many as possible. When half is unknown, the other half is not half known." "Truth is so dear a friend, and He that sent it so much more dear, that whatever I suffer I dare not stifle or conceal it." "As long as you are uncertain, profess yourselves uncertain; and if men

condemn you for your ignorance when you are willing to know the truth, so will not God; but when you are certain, resolve in the strength of God, and hold fast whatever it costs you, even to the death, and never fear being losers by God, by His truth, or by fidelity in your duty." That strain, indeed, is of a higher mood than the cant of the mere theological disputant. It is the strain of Luther or of Locke. It is the rebuke to the cowardly panics of our religious world; it is the rebuke to the cynical indifference of our scientific world; from one who, had he lived in our days, would, alike in the pulpit and the lecture room, have opened upon us that consuming fire of his love for truth which, as he says, "he could not keep secret to himself, shut up in his heart and bones."

What Sir James Stephen has well called his "omnivorous appetite," has certainly been an impediment to the due appreciation of Baxter's literary position. The world is slow to believe that a man can attain excellence in many departments of literature. But of Baxter it may be said that every fresh discovery of works, hitherto partially or altogether unknown, as his composition, discloses a fresh view of his integrity and sincerity.

Some years ago, Mr. Grosart, who has done so much for English literature and theology, reprinted a tractate so rare as to excite the cupidity of eager bibliomaniacs. "The Grand Question Solved" well deserves Mr. Grosart's praise, when he declares that it "has all its saintly author's best characteristics." Extracts, indeed,

from this little work would go far to prove, in spite of the declarations of many in these days, that it is still possible for those who desire it to communicate the great truths enshrined in the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed, in such a form as to unite, without any injury to the distinctiveness of Christian verity, those who are often separated from each other in acts of worship. His desire for comprehension, and for real unity, was the governing motive of Baxter's later career. He anticipated much that has been written in modern days; and when the miserable condition of a divided Christendom ever comes home with proper force to the minds of thoughtful and meditative students, sentences will be extracted from Baxter's review of his own life, which will throw light upon many a wrangle and dispel many a cloud. True lovers of peace will always delight in aphorisms such as these: "Acquaint yourselves with healing truths; and labour to be as skilful in the work of pacifying and agreeing men, as most are in the work of dividing and disagreeing. Know it to be a part of your Catholic work to be peacemakers, and therefore study how to do it as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. I think most divines themselves in the world do study differences a hundred hours for one hour that ever they study the healing of differences; and that is a shameful disproportion. Do not bend all your wits to find what more may be said against others, and to make the differences as wide as you can, but study as hard to find out men's agreements, and

to reduce the differences to as narrow a compass as is possible. And to that end be sure that you see the true state of the controversy, and distinguish all that is merely verbal from that which is material; and that which is but about methods and modes and circumstances from that which is about substantial truths; and that which is about the inferior truths, though mighty, from that which is about the essentials of Christianity. Be as industrious for peace among others, as if you smarted by it yourself; seek it, and beg it, and follow it, and take no nay. Make it the work of your lives. Lay the unity of the Church upon nothing but what is essential to the Church. Seek after as much truth, and purity, and perfection as you can, but not as necessary to the essence of the Church, or any member of it; nor to denominate and specify your faith and religion by. Tolerate no error or sin so far as not to seek the healing of it; but tolerate all error and sin consisting with Christian faith and charity, so far as not to unchristian and unchurch men for them. Own no man's errors or sins, but own every man that owneth Christ, and whom Christ will own, notwithstanding those errors and infirmities that he is guilty of. Bear with those that Christ will bear with; especially learn the master duty of self-denial, for it is self that is the greatest enemy to Catholicism."

But it was not only as a lover of truth and comprehension that many among the best of his own generation prized him; even in his day there were a few

who saw clearly that a man need not necessarily be a traitor to the faith who entertained some doubts as to the genuineness and authenticity of certain portions of Holy Writ. The passage which seemed too broad for the timid believers of a past generation, and was, indeed, omitted from many editions of "The Saint's Rest," has a special interest for us at this time :—

“ Though all Scripture be of Divine authority, yet he that believeth but some one book, which containeth the doctrine of the substance of salvation, may be saved; much more they that have doubted but of some particular books. They that take the Scripture to be but the writings of godly, honest men, and so to be only a means of making known Christ, having a gradual precedency to the writings of other godly men, and do believe in Christ upon those strong grounds which are drawn from His doctrine, miracles, etc., rather than upon the testimony of the writing, as being purely infallible and Divine, may yet have a Divine and saving faith. Much more those that believe the whole writing to be of Divine inspiration where it handleth the substance, but doubt whether God infallibly guided them in every circumstance. And yet more, those that believe that the Spirit did guide the writers to truth, both in substance and circumstance, but doubt whether He guided them in orthography, or whether their pens were as perfectly guided as their minds. And yet more may those have saving faith who only doubt whether Providence infallibly guided any transcribers or printers,

so as to retain any copy that perfectly agreeth with the autograph."

It is not intended to press this point further. No one is likely to maintain the paradox that Baxter had foresight sufficient to see the direction of modern criticism. All that can be contended is, that he grew in love and freedom, and that the spiritual wealth of his treasure-house increased as he gathered from all sources testimonies to the enduring force of the vital principles of the simplest of the creeds, and the spirit of the Apostolic and early Church.

As a controversialist he had the faults of his age. He was often peevish and unfair. His credulity on the matters of sorcery and witchcraft he shared with all the men of his generation. It is needless to dwell at length on the often amusing details on these subjects, which may be culled from his writings. The tobacco pipe which had the habit of moving itself from a shelf at one end of the room, can be easily matched in many of the memoirs of his time. All lovers of his character would rather dwell on that "love to the souls of men" which one of his friends declared was the peculiar character of Mr. Baxter's spirit. Two sentences, which express the most intense desire of his soul, ought to be laid to heart by all who sigh for unity: "I would as willingly be a martyr for charity as for faith;" and again, "I would rather be a martyr for love than for any other article of the Christian creed."

The portraits of Baxter hardly represent him, as Bates

declared, with a countenance somewhat inclining to a smile. They are marked by the austerity and repression which most men associate with his character. It is indeed said that he was somewhat ungracious in his address; yet it is impossible to think that he who wrote the touching pages of "The Breviate" did not at times unbend and relax. The Rev. Edward Bradley, who contributed some interesting papers some years ago to the *Leisure Hour*, has carefully compared and estimated the various portraits of Baxter, and speaks of one engraved by Caldwell, for "Palmer's Memorials," as full of character no less than of kindness.

In the place where he ministered so faithfully, the pulpit from which he preached, the copy of "The Saint's Rest" presented by Baxter to the corporation, and various relics, are still carefully preserved. On the fly leaf of "The Saint's Rest," in the handwriting of the divine, stands the following sentence: "This Booke being Devoted, as to the service of the Church of Christ in generall, so more especially to the Church at Kiderminster; the Author desireth that this Cobby may be still in the custodye of the high Bayliffe, and intreateth them carefully to Read and Practice it, and beseecheth the Lord to blesse it to their true Reformation, Consolation, and Salvation.—RICH. BAXTER." It was not, however, until our own day that a statue of an impressive and interesting kind was erected in the town which owed so much to him. It would be impossible to omit the beautiful close of Dean Stanley's address from this

sketch of Baxter's character: "His tall, commanding figure, his gaunt features, by the art of the sculptor, are once more seen among us. They now recall something higher and more universal even than his efforts after union, or his struggles for liberty. He and his works have entered into that everlasting rest for which he so longed. He has taught us the way to that rest in words which rise above the jargon of all sects, and may strike a chord in the most philosophic, no less than in the most devout mind. His uplifted hand calls to the unconverted, as of the seventeenth, so of the nineteenth century, 'to turn and live;' to turn and live in accordance with the thousand voices of the Bible, of conscience, of good example, of nature; to turn from all our mean, degrading sins; from all our frivolity, self-indulgence, idleness, corruption, and party spirit; from that want of charity, and want of truth, and want of faith, which depress us all alike—upwards to the higher and more heavenly frame of heart, to the peculiar nobleness of spirit, which, as he truly says, distinguishes not only men from beasts, or the good from the bad, but the best of men from the mediocrity of their kind. Not only in the turmoil of controversy, but in the toil and misery of daily life, in the restlessness of this restless age, his serene countenance tells us of that unseen, better world, where 'there remaineth a rest for the people of God.' It reminds us of that entire resignation wrung from his lips in those latest words: 'Where Thou wilt, what Thou wilt, how Thou wilt.' It reminds us of the high and humble hope

that 'after the rough and tempestuous day we shall at last have the quiet, silent night—light and rest together ; the quietness of the night without its darkness.'

The claim of Baxter to stand high on the roll of English worthies must be grounded on his eminent example of self-sacrifice. His life and his writings were one long and continuous testimony to the true power of Christianity. It has been beautifully observed by the present Bishop of Durham, that "the moral teaching and example of our Lord will ever have the highest value in their own province ; but the core of the Gospel does not lie here. Its distinctive character is, that in revealing a Person it reveals also a principle of life—the union with God in Christ, apprehended by faith in the present, and assured to us hereafter by the Resurrection." It is the glory of Christendom that the lives of holy and self-sacrificing men confirm by example rather than by precept the abiding force of the truth contained in these words.

Principal Tulloch has, with his usual acumen, remarked that the intense enthusiasm of Baxter's character really proved a hindrance to any effectual result from the negotiations which followed the Restoration. The more the history of that time is studied, the more clear does it become that a man who possessed statesmanlike qualities, in which Baxter was deficient, was the only fitting guide through such stormy waters. The very absence, however, of this peculiar energy does not detract in any way from the grand heroism of Baxter's character.

He longed for peace and concord, and was impatient of the craft and delays of statesmen. Had he only possessed a small portion of the temper so conspicuous in Gilbert Burnet, who with all his faults was always equal to the occasion, he might have induced Sheldon and his brethren to look with generous forgetfulness on the sufferings of the clergy, and to stand less resolutely to their own positions. The harshness which certainly shows itself in Baxter's treatment of political partisans, undoubtedly proceeded from the sad temper engendered by constant suffering. Stern, however, as he might be to others, he was never indulgent to himself. "Self-denial and contempt of the world," said Bates, "were shining graces in him." He expected too much of his own spirit from the somewhat narrow thinkers among whom his lot was cast, yet there were some even among them who were fully aware of the commanding character of their friend, and who could thoroughly appreciate the impassioned pathos of his more remarkable utterances. When Sylvester says that "when Baxter spoke of weighty soul concerns, you might find his very spirit drenched therein," he probably expressed the very feelings which many entertained regarding their spiritual master, who was as powerful in the pulpit as he was potent with his pen.

The saintly Thomas Erskine, in his preface to an abridged edition of "The Saint's Rest," in speaking of the qualities of Baxter as a writer uses language which recalls that of Sylvester: "He seizes irresistibly on the

attention, and carries it along with him ; and we assuredly do not know any author who can be compared with him for the power with which he brings his reader directly face to face with death, judgment, and eternity, and compels him to look upon them and converse with them. He is himself most deeply serious, and the holy solemnity of his own soul seems to envelope the reader as with the air of a temple."

It has been one of the peculiar felicities of Baxter to have gained the admiration of men differing widely from each other in theological sentiment. In 1837 the learned Master of Trinity, Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, published his "Christian Institutes," selections from the body of English divinity, and containing among other treatises Baxter's "Catechizing of Families." In his preface he apologises somewhat elaborately for including Baxter in his series. But after explaining his reasons fully, he says, "the main decisive argument, I confess, appeared to me ~~the~~ special value and excellence of the work itself. I sought long, and continued my researches far and wide, but could find nothing in method, in execution, in extent adapted to my wants comparatively with this volume." The Master of Trinity then contrasts Baxter's work with Nowell's Catechism, very much to the advantage of Baxter. The peculiar structure of this book, being in the form of question and answer, has probably stood in the way of its general acceptance. As a complete account of what may still be called the fundamentals of Christian doctrine

and practice, it has no rival in the English language. It is not too much to say, that on the subject of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Baxter preserves a tone of studied and judicial moderation, which will find its parallel only in such writings as the remarkable series of Charges of the late Bishop Thirlwall. Few among those who are now separated by conscientious conviction will object to the statements of Baxter upon many questions which have perplexed and divided Christendom.

In these days men will still prize Baxter's summary of the essence of the contents of Holy Scripture. "Indeed the Holy Scriptures do bear the very image and superscription of God in their ends, matter, and manner, and prove themselves to be His Word. For God has not given us external proofs that such a book or doctrine is His which is itself no better than human works, and has no intrinsic proof of its Divine original : but the *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* evidences concur. What book like the sacred Scriptures has taught the world the knowledge of God, the creation of the world, the end and hope and felicity of man? What the heavenly glory is, and how procured, and how to be obtained, and by whom? How man became sinful and miserable? And how he is recovered? And what wonders of love God has shown to sinners to win their hearts in love to Him? What book has so taught men to live by faith and the hopes of glory, above all the lusts of sense and flesh, and to refer all things in this world to spiritual, holy, and heavenly ends ; to love others as ourselves, and to do good to all, even our

enemies ; to live in such union and communion, and peace, as is caused by this vital grace of love, and not like a heap of sand that every spurn or blast of cross interest will separate? What book so teaches man to love God above all, and to pray to Him, praise Him, and absolutely obey Him with constant pleasure, and to trust Him absolutely with soul and body and estate, and cast all our care upon Him ; and, in a word, to converse in heaven while we are on earth ; and to live as saints that we may live as angels?" Many admirable illustrations could be given from this work of what has been well called Baxter's strange combination of theological moderation with real unction.

Side by side with the opinion of Dr. Wordsworth might be placed the account of "Baxteriana," compiled in his blind old age by the celebrated Arthur Young, given by a Nonconformist minister to the late Dean Stanley: "Young's introduction always struck me as singularly touching and beautiful. The chief defect in his selection is, that arranging his extracts under practical heads, he has no reference to the dates of the works whence they are taken. As Baxter's mind was pre-eminently a progressive one, growing in freedom and insight, and expanding in love to the very last, this total disregard to chronology in his compiler may have occasioned here and there an apparent, in some cases even a real, inconsistency between the tone and tendency of the different extracts. Nevertheless, with all the defects with which it can be reasonably charged,

this little volume ever seemed to me full of spiritual wealth." The little volume spoken of here might well be reprinted with the addition of the "Breviate," the Review of his own life, and the sermon or rather treatise on the death of Mrs Charlton. It would give to another generation sufficient reason for the admiration excited by Baxter in the minds of such men as Sir Matthew Hale, Lord William Russell, Burnet, Usher, Eliot, the apostle of the Indians, Arthur Young, and Christopher Wordsworth.

Surely the claim of Baxter to be remembered has been maintained. Time has dealt in its usual fashion with many of the men of his generation. Very few readers are now found who take delight in Owen, or Howe, or even in Baxter. But there will still be found some, of special tastes, who find in the devotional writings and personal reminiscences of Baxter a most peculiar charm. "These," says the present Bishop of Peterborough at the close of an eloquent lecture, "were precious things that Baxter had given to Christendom; and looking back to those stormy times in which he lived, we might see, rising above the dust and tumult of the conflict, that ensign of truth which men still carry forth in their wars of good against bad, right against wrong, righteousness against sin and misery. And, looking back over the raging sea of contention, its great waves seemed to dwindle into little more than ripples; and we should earnestly desire that when our time came for departing this life, we might be enabled to look back on a life as

holy and blessed as was his, and that our souls might be with the soul of Richard Baxter."

It is after all a somewhat sad reflection that the life and labour of such a man as Baxter does very little in the way of real restoration. "Good men work and suffer, and bad men enjoy their labours and spoil them: a step is made in advance—evil rolled back and kept in check for a while, only to return, perhaps the stronger. But thus, and thus only, is truth passed on, and the world preserved from utter corruption." These are the words of an eloquent living writer, suggested by the career of one who has been in these pages—in the opinion of some, doubtless, too fancifully—compared with Richard Baxter. There is one likeness, however, between the life of Anselm and the life of Baxter which cannot deceive and cannot escape the attention of the most careless reader. They were lovers of peace in ages of turbulence and discord. Faith in the final victory of truth, faith in the perfect comfort and enduring solace derived from a personal union with a personal Christ, brought to both consolation in trouble, and gave enduring beauty and true dignity to lives of trial, hardship, and humiliation.



