

and Christianity, and sometimes it would have been well had he used more endeavour to make his statements good. Thus: 'In order to distinguish Jesus from others of the same name, he was called the son of Mary. His widowed mother, soon after her husband's death, moved to Cana, a small town about eight miles from Nazareth. Here Jesus plied the trade of carpenter during his youth, and gradually developed that character which afterwards made him one of the greatest of moral reformers; great because his teachings have influenced a vast civilization, although they contain nothing either purer or higher than had been taught before.' The statements that may be

challenged are not a few. But the value of the book lies in its earnestness of ethical purpose. Mr. Perrin does not care about a science of religions; it is the practice of religion that he wants. And he is bold enough to pass all the great religions of the world before him, while he criticizes them in respect of the gulf that lies between their profession and their practice. His book closes this survey fitly. Science that deals with religions as mere natural phenomena, classifying them but pronouncing no judgment on them, is not the last word we must listen to. The last word is, 'This do, and thou shalt live.' Mr. Perrin brings us back to that.

## Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter: A Comparison and a Contrast.

BY THE REV. MARTIN LEWIS, B.A., FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON.

### II.

IN natural disposition the Anglican possessed a sweetness of blood and a happiness of temper denied to the Puritan. Dean Rust said most truly, in his funeral panegyric, 'Nature had befriended him much in constitution; his soul was made up of harmony; he was a person of a most sweet and obliging humour; his cadences were musical.'

Baxter's temperament was not thus finely balanced and tuned. His figure was indeed tall and slender; his voice rich and full; he could smile with dignity and sweetness; but there were in his nature discordant elements of peevishness, asperity, and disputatious stubbornness. And yet beneath a rugged and thorny surface there were fountains of passionate tenderness, courageous cheerfulness, and large-hearted charity, deeper than the streams which sparkled through the flowery meads of the more winsome nature.

The tender humanity of Baxter's heart of hearts wells up in the almost ideal love which united him to his noble wife.

Jeremy Taylor was twice married, but from his writings we should scarcely guess that either of his wives had ever existed. His flowing periods and delicate compliments were reserved for his

lady friends of high rank, the matchless Orinda and the rest. Baxter's wedded life was a romance from first to last. After he had become homeless and almost penniless, on black St. Bartholomew's Day, for conscience' sake; when he was beginning a life of perpetual martyrdom, — 'in prisons frequent, in deaths oft, in labours more abundant,' an exile and a wanderer in his own dear native land, then it was that a noble woman took that sad, brave heart to her tender bosom. Margaret Charlton was a lady of gentle birth and breeding. She was young, only twenty-three, and he was growing old, nearing fifty. She was rich, and he was poor. But true love laughs at all barriers and overleaps all gulfs. The two lives flowed into one, and were joined in perfect unity.

When they were first engaged, Baxter, with the absolute disinterestedness of his character, stipulated two things: that he should have none of her money, and that she should not ask from him any of the time which belonged to the duties of his sacred calling. The compact was faithfully kept. Baxter's helpmeet became his second-self, and for nineteen years her heroic and gracious figure stood like a good angel by her husband's side, befriending him in prison and in sickness;

following him cheerfully from hiding-place to hiding-place; taking the sting from his wounds and the bitterness from his temper; ever prompting him to duty, counselling him with excellent sense, and joining with him in countless acts of beneficence.

And her husband showed himself worthy even of this superb affection. Some of his letters to her overflow with exquisite tenderness, and he paid her an immortal tribute in the Breviat of her life, in which he tells how they lived together 'in inviolate love and mutual complacency,' till 'the blade of her spirit being too keen, cut the sheath,' and Baxter was left on earth for ten lonely years to carry her memory embalmed with fragrant spices in his heart, next to his God, his chief food.

There is no chapter in the other life that will bear comparison with that Puritan love story.

In Theology these representatives of opposed schools were on many points not far apart. Taylor was Arminian in his leanings; Baxter was Calvinistic. But each had an eclectic system peculiar to himself, and on some points, such as Justification, they approach very near to one another. Taylor was more of a rhetorician than an exact theologian. Baxter held the Puritan faith in a comprehensive system of doctrine as competent to explain the universe, and though his own particular system was different from all others, he insisted upon it in his earlier and more dogmatic days with absolute confidence. But his views on many points broadened and mellowed wonderfully in later years.

The close of Taylor's career did not reach anything like the height and grandeur of Baxter's. The Bishop of Dromore was indefatigable in diocesan duties, but in the day of victory he failed to carry into practice the large and tolerant principles for which he had pleaded in the day of adversity. The rigorous measures he adopted to silence the resolute Presbyterians of Ulster ill became the author of *The Liberty of Prophesying*. In the wide places of prosperity the prelate's spirit narrowed. Baxter might have been a bishop also, and the See of Hereford, which he declined, was a higher honour than that of Dromore. But for the sake of a very tender conscience he lived for nearly thirty years a despised Nonconformist, driven from lodging to lodging, from chapel to chapel, from prison to

prison; accused by the ignorant parson in whose church he meekly worshipped week by week, because he addressed a few friends in his own house; harried by the infamous Conventicle and Five-Mile Acts; brutally insulted in his venerable age by the yet more infamous Judge Jeffreys, who threatened to flog him through the streets of London; never enjoying any long respite from persecution, until shortly before his death the Revolution brought a quiet sunset to end his stormy life. But this is the most splendid trait in all Baxter's lofty character, that amid sufferings and wrongs that might well have embittered the sweetest nature, this man grew steadily in breadth of view, in calmness of judgment, in catholicity of spirit, in Christian gentleness and magnanimity and patience.

At the very time when he was sent to gaol by the leaders of the Church of England, he obtained from the King, through the influence of one of his disciples, Sir R. Temple, the charter for the Original Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Sir James Stephen has pointed to this as one of the noblest revenges ever taken by man.

At a time when Foreign Missions were ignored even by earnest Christians, Baxter was eager for the conversion of the heathen, and corresponded with Eliot, the apostle of the Indians. In his letters he extols the industry of the Jesuits and friars and their successes, which 'do shame all of us, save you.'

On the doctrine of the Atonement, Baxter maintained the modern evangelical view, that 'Christ did not come to make God loving and good, but to make men loving and good,' and to make it possible for God to forgive us in consistency with His honour and justice.

His thoughts on many questions ran far in advance of his contemporaries, and often astonish one by their brilliant anticipation of modern positions to which we have been only slowly led after two centuries.

Thus his missionary zeal was not inflamed by the hard doctrine of the hopeless perdition of the heathen which many of the best men of his day cheerfully accepted. 'I am not inclined to pass a peremptory sentence of damnation upon all that never heard of Christ, having some more reason than I knew of before to think that God's dealings with such are much unknown to us.' It is an

anticipation of Livingstone's answer, 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?'

Lord Brougham pointed out that when the Slave Trade first appeared, 'the pious and fearless Richard Baxter was one of the first to express his disapprobation.' In 1673 he wrote: 'They who go as pirates and take away poor Africans and sell them, or use them as beasts of burden, ought to be considered the common enemies of mankind, fitter to be called demons than Christians.' It was an anticipation of Wilberforce and Emancipation.

And on the doctrine of Holy Scripture Baxter's teaching is of quite peculiar interest and value for Scottish Christians to-day.

There is a passage in the *Saints' Rest* omitted from some editions, because it gave offence to less robust believers, to which we shall do well to give heed.

'Though all Scripture be of divine authority, yet he that believeth but one book, which containeth the doctrine of the substance of salvation, may be saved.

'They that take the Scriptures 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 and miracles, rather than upon the testimony of the writing as being purely infallible and divine, may have a divine, saving faith. Much more those that believe the whole writing to be of divine inspiration when it handleth the substance, but doubt whether God infallibly guided in every circumstance.'

Is it not marvellous anticipation of the position of modern scholarly evangelism, earnestly desiring to be true at once to the facts of faith and to the facts of criticism? May not some devout Christians of the older type, who are trembling for the dear Ark of God, be reassured by the thought that teachers who are moving on the very same lines as the saintly author of the *Saints' Rest*, cannot be so very far astray; and, like him, may be sound and consistent believers in the saving verities of Christ's gospel?

Christians must learn to grow as Baxter grew—in knowledge and understanding, as well as in grace, right on to the end of their earthly school days.

In the *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ* the man himself has written down 'what changes God had wrought in his mind since the unriper times of youth, and where he had differed in judgment and disposition from his former self.' That closing passage is unique in Christian autobiography. Dr. Benjamin Jowett preached a sermon upon it in Westminster Abbey, in which he calls Baxter 'one of the greatest of Englishmen, not only of his own time, but of any time.' The shrewd Master of Balliol cannot have been unduly prejudiced in favour of a fervent evangelical; nor can Sir James Stephen, when he said to Dean Stanley, '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 it.' The perusal made the large-hearted dean one of Baxter's most devoted admirers; and the present writer has heard him in the Abbey set Baxter beside Anselm as a great Christian thinker, quoting with delight Baxter's famous saying, 'I had as lief die for charity as for any article in the Creed.'

The evangelical fervour of Baxter's faith is proverbial; but too few know that he added to his faith magnificent breadths of knowledge, brotherly kindness, and charity. Is it not after a happy union of warm piety with veracity and charity that the best evangelical Christians of to-day are striving? They could not find a better model than Baxter the Aged.

There is another present-day question with which both Taylor and Baxter wrestled in their time, and on which they have light to lend us—the Visible Unity of Christians and Christian Churches. Both our heroes strove, each in his own way, to bring about greater visible union among warring servants of the one Lord. In his *Reliquiæ* Baxter says, 'Except in the case of the infidel world, nothing is so bad and grievous to my thoughts as the case of divided Churches. The contentions . . . have woefully hindered the kingdom of Christ.' And again, 'He that is not a son of peace is not a son of God.' His efforts after unity began early among his neighbours round Kidderminster; they were continued in a wider field by the scheme of comprehension laid before the bishops after the Restoration.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baxter had no difficulty about the use of the ring in marriage, but he could never bring himself to use the sign of the cross in baptism. In this, again, he anticipated modern Presbyterian usage.

The harmonious spirit of Jeremy Taylor also hated the jarring discords of acrimonious contentions over minutiae, which he scornfully calls 'the fringes of the garment of the body of religion.' He too discusses plans of union, but perhaps his most important contribution to the question was his exposure of methods that are *not* sound, e.g. the method of *Moderation* favoured by Erasmus and Grotius, in which union is sought by the use of vague terms, 'phrases of accommodation,' capable of diverse interpretation, and covering opposed views in a haze of dubious words. Taylor rightly judges: 'This is but the skinning of an old sore, and will break out again upon all occasions.'

He sees God's way in the promise: 'If any man will do My will, he shall know.' Truth dwells implicitly in goodness; by cultivating the goodness of the divine life, Christians will draw nearer to one another, and learn by degrees to see 'eye to eye.'

That is true, and Baxter would have said Amen. But Baxter advances a long step farther when, by another of his remarkable anticipations, he grasped the principle of union which has been applied with happy effects in the recent union in Scotland—I mean the principle of gradation in truth—of *degrees* of certainty and degrees of importance. Some Christian doctrines are more sure and more important than others. In *The Great Question Solved*, Baxter says, 'Study hard to find out men's agreements, and to reduce the differences to as narrow a compass as possible. Be sure to distinguish all that is merely verbal from that which is material; and that which is about methods and modes from that which is about substantial truths; and that which is about inferior truths, though mighty, from that which is about the essentials of Christianity.' 'Lay not the unity of the Church upon anything but what is essential to the Church.'

Baxter's idea was that Christians might unite on the basis of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. He had a dream of a great Protestant Church, which would include the excellences of all the separate Churches. Each minister was to have full independent authority in his own congregation; but ministers were to meet for conference in Presbyteries and

Synods, and a kind of bishop was to act as a permanent moderator. The age was not ready for any such fusion, nor is our age ready. Yet the Churches are all learning fast from one another. Episcopalians in the colonies, and Congregationalists in England, are becoming more Presbyterian in government; Presbyterians are learning the value of Congregational freedom and of Episcopal reverence, order, and beauty in worship. Larger unions are looming dimly through the mists of the future, and some day Baxter's dream may yet come true. But it will never be realized if Anglicans remain as immovable as they did at the conference after the Restoration, for Episcopal intolerance was the rock that sadly wrecked all Baxter's eager hopes.

Both our teachers warn us that the true line of advance in all schemes of union is not that of unreal agreement by skilfully framed forms of words to which different meanings may be attached. One of them tells us that the true line lies along frank admission of differences joined to a demand for agreement on essential virtues. The right method leaves 'open questions.'

Sons of peace must be content to hasten slowly—waiting for real and cordial union—learning patience from Jeremy Taylor's wisdom. And while controversies clash and division sunders, and good men differ in this dim world, when 'we see only in part,' and 'prophecy in part,' we may find comfort in Baxter's insight.

'It is better men should be purblind, and make the mistakes of the half-blind, than make no mistakes being blind. He that never regardeth the Word of God is not likely to err much about it. Men will sooner fall out about gold and pearls than swine or asses will.'

And 'let us remember,' he adds again, 'while we wrangle here in the dark, we are dying and passing to the world which will decide all our controversies, and the safest passage is by a peaceable holiness. It is a great source of calm and repose in our religious life always to turn from small things to great; from things far away to things near at hand; from the foolishness of controversy to the truths which are simple and eternal, from man to God.'