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HERESY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH CULTURE, 1530-1700

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**‘Take heed of being too forward in imposinge on others’:¹
the Baxterian Conception of Orthodoxy in the Later Seventeenth Century**

by

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1. The ‘Over-Orthodox Doctors’

‘No particular Words in the World are *Essentials* of our Religion’.² This startling pronouncement was made by the Puritan divine Richard Baxter during a conference convened in London in late 1654 to define the limits of tolerable religious orthodoxy under the Protectorate. What lay behind these words was a deep-seated suspicion of creedal formulae, confessions and platforms which to Baxter’s mind simply ‘*multiply controversies*, and fill the minds of men with scruples, and ensnare their consciences, and engage men in parties against each other to the certain breach of Charity’. Since ‘the Christian world will never have Concord, but in a FEW, CERTAIN, NECESSARY things’, to insist on subscription to any form of words is a recipe for divisiveness. ‘The great cause of our uncharitable censures and divisions, hath been our departing from the Antient simplicity of Faith, and also from the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures, to be the Rule and Test of Faith’.³ ‘*Did the Primitive church require Subscription to all our 39 Articles?*’ he pointedly asked.⁴

This distrust of credal definitions of orthodoxy was a distinctive feature of Baxter’s inclusive churchmanship. Despite his inveterate disputatiousness and a temperament which could be impatient, irritable and severe, he worked tirelessly throughout his career to counter the ecclesiastical fissiparousness of the seventeenth century. Regarding denominational labels as the product of doctrinal and ecclesiological tribalism Baxter declined to accept any one for himself: ‘You could not’, he wrote, ‘(except a Catholick Christian) have trulier called me, than an *Episcopal-Presbyterian-*

Independent'.⁵ His own preferred titles were 'meer Christian', 'catholick Christian' or 'mere Catholick':

the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible wherever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible: But must you know what Sect or Party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call *Meer Christians* by the name of a *Party* ... I am of that Party which is so against Parties: If the Name of CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLICK CHRISTIAN.⁶

To his application for a licence under Charles II's 1672 Declaration of Indulgence Baxter appended a statement of 'My Case' which began 'My Religion is meerly Christian ... The Church which I am a member of is the universality of Christians; in conjunction with all particular Churches of Christians in England or elsewhere in the world, whose communion according to my capacity I desire ...'.⁷ When asked to define this 'mere Christianity', he would not be drawn into definitions, distinctions or amplifications:

In ... Scripture all the Essentialls of Christianity (the Integralls too) are plainly expressed. This Rule is Divine & so our faith is Divine. Had we but a humane Rule, we could have but a humane faith. If any would know our Religion, its hither that we send them. Our Confessions are but to satisfy men of our understandinge the sense of passages of scripture ... we make none of our Confessions the Rule of our faith: nor do we take any thinge in them to be infallible & unalterable, further than it agreeth with the Scripture which is our Rule till we returne to this *Scripture sufficiency & ancient simplicity*, there is no hope of the ancient Christian unity and charity.⁸

If pressed, he would refer to St. Vincent de Lérins: 'our Religion is nothing but meer CHRISTIANITY ... *We profess to stand to the testimony of Antiquity, believing ...* with Vincent Lerinensis, *Quod semper ubique & ab omnibus receptum is my Religion*'.⁹

Baxter was hence much less inclined to construct a doctrinal framework by which to regulate belief than were many of his contemporaries: civil and ecclesiastical authorities should 'Impose nothinge to be necessarily subscribed, but what is express Scripture, or (if any will needs goe further) which hath not the note of Catholicisme, [*ab*

omnibus ubique et semper receptum].¹⁰ Preferring to ‘erre in grantinge too much liberty, than too little’ and convinced that ‘the best way is not to fall upon the hereticall by notable penalties as Imprisonment, &c’ but to support godly ministers in their refutation of error and in their preaching the faith, Baxter was sparing in his use of the word *heretic*. It had, he noted, been used historically of such a range of types and degrees of doctrinal error, with or without attendant schism, that it served rather to define the theological bias of those who deployed it than the relationship to the Christian tradition of those it condemned.¹¹ He was no more impressed by the claim to orthodoxy than he was by the charge of heresy:

The self-appropriated title of Orthodoxe, & the straining of Heterodoxe odious consequents from their Brethrens words, will prove but insufficient figleaves to cover the nakednes of uncharitable dividers, when the Lord of Peace shall search & judge them.¹²

Since it was precisely the purpose of the 1654 conference to appropriate, and define, orthodoxy, Baxter was hardly likely to find its business congenial. Knowing ‘how ticklish a Business the Enumeration of Fundamentals was’, he ‘would have had the Brethren to have offered the Parliament the *Creed*, *Lord’s Prayer*, and *Decalogue* alone as our Essentials or Fundamentals’, responding to the objection that Papists or Socinians might subscribe these with the startling words, ‘So much the better, and so much the fitter it is to be the Matter of our Concord’.¹³

This is the more remarkable when the context for that meeting of divines in 1654 is recalled. During the later 1640s the unitarian views of John Biddle had been attracting increasing notoriety. In September 1647 his *Twelve Arguments ... Wherein the Deity of the Holy Ghost is Clearly and Fully Refuted* (1647) was publicly burned by order of Parliament.¹⁴ Five years later, in 1652, Parliament burned (not for the first time) a new

Latin edition of the Socinian ‘Racovian Catechism’, which had been licensed for publication by Milton; Biddle was almost certainly responsible for the English translation which nevertheless appeared that summer.¹⁵ Two year later, Biddle’s heterodox views were given fuller expression in his *Twofold Catechism* (1654). A few months after its publication there appeared a magisterial refutation of its anti-trinitarian (or, in contemporary terminology, Socinian) views by the Independent (or Congregationalist) leader John Owen in his 700-page *Vindiciae Evangelicae or the Mystery of the Gospell Vindicated and Socinianisme Examined* (1655). Owen, Dean of Christ Church in the 1650s and Cromwell’s Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University from 1652 to 1657, was the pre-eminent Puritan and ecclesiastical authority of the Interregnum.¹⁶ As the champion of Calvinist orthodoxy, he now wrote by order of the Council of State.¹⁷

Owen’s services to orthodoxy went beyond this publication. In 1652, the Rump not only burned the Racovian Catechism but, in response to a petition presented by Owen and other Congregational ministers, it had set up a committee of fourteen members (including Cromwell) to receive from the petitioning divines proposals for the better propagation of the Gospel, that is, proposals not merely to evangelise but to prevent such errors as Biddle’s from gaining a hold.¹⁸ These shortly appeared as *The Humble Proposals of Mr. Owen, Mr. Tho. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, Mr. Sympson and Other Ministers* (1652) and they caused considerable alarm amongst enthusiasts and sectaries who saw them as a conservative reaction which would subdue the conscientious liberty of the saints. They had some cause for concern.¹⁹ The fourteenth article proposed that those who opposed the principles of Christian religion should ‘not be suffered to preach’. In response, the committee asked for a definition of these principles. When, in December

1652, *The Humble Proposals* were reissued as *Proposals for the Furtherance and Propagation of the Gospel in this Nation*, the title page advertised the inclusion of *Some Principles of Christian Religion ... in explanation of one of the said Proposals*, and these principles included authorising the civil power to act against heretics. The 'Doctrine and Way of Worship owned by the State' was to be safeguarded.²⁰ These fifteen principles and the proposal that orthodoxy should be imposed upon the nation are what provoked Milton in May 1652 to implore Cromwell, 'our chief of men', to 'Help us to save free conscience from the paw/ Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw'.²¹

The Proposals were lost in the forcible dissolution of the Rump in April 1653. However, when, at the end of that year, *The Instrument of Government*, the new Protectorate's constitution, required 'the Christian religion, as contained in the Scriptures' to be 'publicly held forth', with toleration of those who, differing in judgement, yet professed 'faith in God by Jesus Christ', a question arose wherein precisely this religion consisted and how far this toleration extended.²² It was to settle this question that in November 1654 a group of some twelve or fifteen divines was called together to draw up a statement of religious fundamentals which the sub-committee set up to advise Cromwell and the First Protectorate Parliament (in its capacity as a Grand Committee on Religion) could put forward as a definition of tolerable religious orthodoxy to be maintained by this public profession.²³ The divines met in Westminster Abbey's fourteenth-century Jerusalem Chamber, where the Westminster Assembly had sat ten years before. It was here that Baxter issued his challenge to Owen's response to the threat of heresy,²⁴ styling him and his colleagues the 'over-Orthodox Doctors' for seeking to safeguard orthodoxy with self-defeating prescriptive narrowness. To Owen,

Baxter's inclusiveness was as infuriating in its vagueness and intolerable in its laxity as was to Baxter what he took to be Owen's Calvinist 'tincture of Faction'.²⁵

2. 'Hot-headed Sectaries'

The responses of Owen and Baxter to the challenge of heresy in 1654 were thus fundamentally different. This could have been foreseen. Behind their disagreement about the status of confessions of faith lay incompatible differences of temperament and doctrinal emphasis. These had already occasioned impassioned dispute between the two men. In Owen's Calvinism Baxter detected the one heresy which threatened the very foundations of Christianity: antinomianism. To his mind, predestinarian theologies such as Owen's came perilously close to licensing ungodliness since talk of assured election, unconditional and complete justification, the unmerited free gift of grace, the abrogation of the Mosaic law and the necessary perseverance of the elect all too easily divorced the life of faith from the challenge of moral effort:

I doubt it is the undoing of many to imagine, that if once they are sanctified, they are so sure in the hands of Christ, that they have no more care to take, nor no more danger to be afraid of, and at last think that they have no more to do, as of necessity to Salvation; and thus prove that indeed they were never sanctified.²⁶

On the contrary, conversion (and justification) are not single, final events: '*much of the Work of your Salvation is yet to do, when you are Converted*. You have happily begun; but you have not finished. You have hit of the right way, but you have your Journey yet to go'.²⁷ Christ

never intended to justifie or sanctifie us perfectly at the first ... but to carry on both proportionably and by degrees, that we may have daily use for his daily mediation, and may daily pray, *Forgive us our trespasses*.²⁸

Continuing spiritual effort and progress is hence essential to Christianity: ‘*your Conversion is not sound if you are not heartily desirous to encrease*. Grace is not true, if there be not a desire after more’.²⁹ To any Calvinist, the moralism (or *legalism*, in contemporary terminology) of such views compromises the omnipotence of the divine will and detracts from the saving grace of Christ by allowing to human effort a role in determining eternal destinies. From this point of view, Baxter was all but peddling Arminianism, if not Pelagianism, and, indeed, he was a good deal more sympathetic towards Arminianism, even to Popery, than to extreme forms of Calvinism. The former at least promoted active Christian witness; by encouraging spiritual security and confidence in election, the predestinarian emphasis of the latter appeared to Baxter incipiently, if not intrinsically, antinomian.³⁰ For him, this was hardly a heresy at all: it ought ‘rather to be called *Atheism*, and *Infidelity*, than *Antinomianism*’ since it is less a theological position (however erroneous) than simple ungodliness: ‘though the ignorant cannot mouth it so plausibly, nor talk not so much of free Grace, yet they have the same tenets, and all men are naturally of the Antinomian Religion’.³¹

Bitter experience lay behind the vehemence with which Baxter reacted to any hint of antinomianism. He had spent the early years of the Civil War in the safety of Coventry, largely untroubled. However, when, two days after the battle of Naseby, he visited the Parliamentary army quarters at Leicester, he was appalled to discover ‘a new face of things which I never dreamt of’. While ‘We that lived quietly in *Coventry* did keep to our old Principles, and ... were unfeignedly for King and Parliament’, he now encountered in the New Model Army a body of men among whom radical and enthusiastic ideas were eagerly embraced and officers among whom ‘hot-headed

Sectaries had got into the highest places' and were Cromwell's 'chief Favourites'. Their intentions Baxter took to be no less than 'to subvert both Church and State': they 'were far from thinking of ... any healing way between the Episcopal and the Presbyterians'; 'they took the King for a Tyrant and an Enemy, and really intended absolutely to master him, or ruine him'.³² Baxter's Puritanism valued order and authority; the revolutionary and radical wing of the movement disclosed to him a prospect of anarchy, anarchy fuelled by the corrupting allurements of the antinomian views which he found so prevalent amongst the unschooled soldiery and their mechanic preachers. They may not have been erudite masters of reformed theology like Owen, but in their disregard for moral, as for political and social, traditions, Baxter saw writ large the perversion of Christian liberty intimated by Owen's scholasticism.

Discovering just how far prevailing opinion had moved during his secure residence at Coventry, he reproached himself for having in 1642 or 43 declined an invitation from Cromwell to act as chaplain 'with that famous Troop which he began his Army with', 'for then all the Fire was in one Spark'.³³ Realising his mistake, he now agreed to act as chaplain in the regiment commanded by Edward Whalley, but with the express intention of countering the spread of radical ideas among the troops, which, not surprisingly, drew upon him 'the discountenance of *Cromwell*, and the chief Officers of his Mind'.³⁴ Baxter's subsequent army experiences of enthusiasm and radicalism gave to his theology what, for the rest of his life, would be its characteristic emphasis upon continuing moral commitment, growth in grace and the conditionality of justification:

when I was in the Army [antinomianism] was the predominant Infection: The Books of Dr. [*Tobias*] *Crisp*, *Paul Hobson*, [*John*] *Saltmarsh*, [*Walter*] *Cradock*, and abundance such like were the Writings most applauded; and he was thought

no Spiritual Christian, but a Legalist that savoured not of Antinomianism, which was sugared with the Title of *Free-grace*.³⁵

He became convinced that, far from exalting divine mercy or constituting Christian liberation, such exclusive reliance upon unmerited free grace was antithetical not only to the moral life but to all civil and religious order.³⁶

Out of this conviction arose Baxter's first publication, *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), written to answer the question 'How in Matth. 25 the reward is adjudged to men on account of their good works?'. Baxter's answer, that justification is a process involving human co-operation with grace, stirred up a hornet's nest of opposition. Particularly controversial was his fifteenth thesis, that 'Though Christ hath sufficiently satisfied the Law, yet it is not his Will, or the Will of the Father, that any man should be justified or save thereby, who hath not some ground in himself of personal and particular right thereto'. He foresaw that this characterization of the justified as 'personally righteous' and possessed of a 'working Faith' 'will have the loudest out-cries raised against it: and will make some cry out, *Heresie, Popery, Socinianism!*', and so it proved.³⁷ Baxter was embroiled in several years' private correspondence with animadvertisers and finally published his *Apology* (1654) against half-a-dozen published tracts critical of the *Aphorismes*. Amongst those ranged against Baxter was Owen. In an appendix to the *Aphorismes* Baxter had engaged with Owen for having in *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu; or, The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647) 'written some Passages too near Antinomianism'. Owen responded in *Of the Death of Christ* (1650), but in his *Confession* (1655) Baxter again numbered Owen among the antinomians.³⁸ Owen replied in his *Vindiciae Evangelicae* by implying that for his part Baxter was to be numbered with Biddle among the Socinians.³⁹ These were bruising

encounters for a comparatively young divine, but Baxter would maintain his position throughout his life, repeatedly drawing upon himself charges of Arminianism, Popery and even Pelagianism.

3. Common Sense

It is, then, not surprising that when Baxter and Owen met in the Jerusalem Chamber in the winter of 1654 they did not see eye-to-eye. Eight years later, the Act of Uniformity in one way changed everything, for Congregationalists and Presbyterians, together with Baptists and all other forms of Puritan confession, now found themselves excluded from the established church and, in the years following, subject to the penal religious legislation of the ‘Clarendon Code’. The shared experience of persecution tended to unite nonconformists as a single body of dissenters,⁴⁰ and for a while internal doctrinal debates lapsed: the issue was rather how to respond to the new external circumstances of the Restoration. On the one hand, the church polity of Congregationalists, who generally embraced Calvinism, stressed the autonomy of independent congregations and so argued for toleration (or ‘indulgence’); on the other, those commonly known as Presbyterians (among whom we may count Baxter), who tended towards moderate Calvinism (in this differing from their Scottish namesakes), favoured a national parochial church and so argued for the incorporation of dissent within a more liberal established church (or comprehension).⁴¹ In the 1660s, how to accommodate liberty of conscience was the burning issue.⁴²

Nevertheless, the fundamental divide apparent in 1654 survived the Restoration and the tension within nonconformity between the inclination, on the one hand, to define

orthodoxy with Calvinist rigour and, on the other, to tolerate as wide a range of doctrinal opinion as possible, soon declared itself. When, in *The Design of Christianity* (1671), the Latitudinarian episcopal divine Edward Fowler, arguing that the intention of the Christian gospel is to improve human lives through imitation of the life of Jesus, maintained the innate moral awareness of human beings and stressed the importance of holy living, the Calvinist John Bunyan, then nearing the end of his twelve-year term in Bedford goal, was appalled at this exaltation of the 'light of nature' above the saving work of Christ. He responded with a vituperative *Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith* (1672).⁴³ Baxter, for whom Bunyan was 'an unlearned Antinomian-Anabaptist' (though he 'never heard that Bunnian was not an honest godly man'),⁴⁴ came to Fowler's defence with *How Far Holiness is the Design of Christianity* (1671), arguing, as he had done twenty years before, that 'it is a notorious error of such as say that Justification is perfect as soon as it begin', that 'Justification and Sanctification go hand in hand together', and that active moral effort is the agency of sanctification: holiness is the 'Active Habitual ... Dedication, & Devotion, of Intellectual free-agents ... to God'.⁴⁵ *Free agency* was not a term to be bandied about lightly, as Baxter was very soon reminded. In 1672 the issuing of Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence (even though soon withdrawn through parliamentary pressure) gave nonconformity a public presence, and the Merchants' lecture established at Pinners' Hall a public platform. However, that platform made public the doctrinal rift within nonconformity: Baxter recalled that his own contributions led to it being

cried abroad, that I preached against the Independents; especially, if I did but say That Man's Will had a Natural Liberty, though a Moral Thralldom to Vice, and that Men might have Christ and Life, if they were truly willing, though Grace must make them willing; and that *Men* have power to do better than they do, It

was cried abroad that among all the Party I preached up *Arminianism* and Free Will, and *Man's Power*, and O! what an odious Crime was this!⁴⁶

It was an 'odious crime' because it ascribed to human reason the power to make choices and was thus a step on the road not only to Arminianism but to Socinianism.

The heinousness of this became apparent in an exchange a few years later between Baxter's friend and correspondent John Howe, formerly chaplain to both Oliver and Richard Cromwell and now a leading London nonconformist minister,⁴⁷ and Thomas Danson, like Howe an ejected minister, who, again like Howe, had been a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, in the 1650s when the eminent Independent Thomas Goodwin was the College's President.⁴⁸ In 1677 Howe published anonymously *The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels, Exhortations, and Whatsoever Other Means He Uses to Prevent Them*. The dilemma Howe addressed - how is divine foreknowledge of human impenitency and damnation compatible with Biblical promises of salvation and with exhortations to faith? - is posed particularly acutely by predestinarian theologies and it had consequently engaged Calvin himself. If some 'are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation', what of those apparently unlimited Gospel promises of salvation? Calvin acknowledged that it can be objected that God appears to be 'inconsistent with himself, in inviting all without distinction while he elects only a few'.⁴⁹ Either the divine wisdom does not encompass all future contingents (which safeguards God's sincerity but at the cost of his omniscience) or the divine will does not truly intend men's happiness (which safeguards God's wisdom but at the cost of his sincerity).

Howe deals with this problem by appealing to the assumed reasonableness of his readers, encouraging them to rely upon what is known of the just and benign nature of

God and to retain a due awareness of the inability of the human mind to encompass divine perfection. He is ruefully aware that "Tis not hard for a good Wit to have somewhat to say for any thing. But to dispute against the common sense of Mankind ... is but to trifle'.⁵⁰ Anticipating what would become an Enlightenment commonplace, he recommends trust in that common sense rather than in the partial, flawed and idiosyncratic understanding of any one individual. And that common sense insists that human beings are not 'meer machines', set inexorably upon their eternal course. This is not to posit an ineffectual will in God: despite the divine desire of universal salvation (God 'will have all men to be saved' (I Titus 2:4)), 'imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the Divine Will, meerly for its not effecting every thing, whereto it may have a *real* propension':⁵¹

when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part ... he foresee[s], many will not be moved thereby; but persist in wilful neglect, and rebellions till they perish: He, at the same time, sees that they *might do* otherwise, and that, if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them.⁵²

The responsibility, and the choice, is theirs.

This brings us to what really appalled Howe: that Calvin's predestinarian theology appears to make God responsible for sin. Howe dare not entertain 'The horror of so black a conception of God' as he takes to be the consequence of the doctrine of double predestination, that God 'should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most Blessed Self, and then to exact severest Punishments for the offence done'.⁵³ Calvinist creeds, like Calvin himself in the *Institutes*,⁵⁴ might firmly reject any such implication,⁵⁵ but to Howe's mind, the inference that 'the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish, the same thing' is

inescapable, and ‘against the entire summe and substance of all Morality, and Religion’.⁵⁶ To Calvinists, however, Howe’s appeal to reasonableness and free will was nonsense, for if justification and election are in any sense conditional not upon the divine decrees but upon human choice and obedience, then the divine will is no longer sovereign: ‘it is euery way ... against common se[n]se’, wrote the Elizabethan Puritan and ‘English Calvin’, William Perkins, for it is ‘flat to hang Gods will vpon mans wil, to make euery man an Emperour, and God his vnderling, and to change the order of nature by subordinating Gods will, which is the first cause, to the will of man, which is the second’.⁵⁷

Howe’s dissatisfaction with such rigorous Calvinism belongs to a discernible tradition in seventeenth-century English Puritanism, a tradition which commonly appealed to the ‘middle way’ associated with the French theologian Moïse Amyraut (Amyraldus; 1596-1664) and the Protestant academy of Saumur, of which Amyraldus was principal from 1641 to his death.⁵⁸ The essential compromise of his teaching was to maintain election to salvation but not to damnation. By attributing salvation to the beneficence of the divine will, damnation to the culpability of the reprobate, this ‘hypothetical universalism’ avoided both the Arminian pitfall of over-reliance upon the human will and the Calvinist pitfall of implicating God in the moral turpitude of the wicked.⁵⁹ To its opponents this theological position led inevitably to Arminianism, but for its advocates it answered the key objections to Calvinism: that it makes God the author of sin and dissociates Christianity from the moral life, encouraging antinomianism. In seventeenth-century England, Baxter was its most influential exponent. For Amyraldus and the theologians of Saumur he had an especially high

regard: *'The middle way which Camero, Ludov. Crocius, Martinus, Amiraldus, Davenant, &c. go, I think, is neerest the Truth'*.⁶⁰ Like them, he maintained that *'Christ dyed for all men, so farr as to purchase them pardon and salvation on condition they would repent and believe; and for the Elect, so farr further as to procure them faith and repentance it self'*,⁶¹ and, like them, he held that predetermination 'is not necessary to all actions naturall or free; but predetermination gracious, or Grace that cometh with a prevailing intent is necessary to holy actions'.⁶² Two years before Howe's tract, in *Richard Baxter's Catholick Theologie* (1675), he offered a 'Summary of Catholick reconciling Theology' which sought to reconcile Arminians and Calvinists in Amyraldus' 'middle way' and to 'end our common Controversies, in Doctrinals, about Predestination, Redemption, justification, assurance, perseverance, and such like' by proving that 'there is no considerable difference between the Arminians and Calvinists'.⁶³ It takes the form of dialogues between A, C and R: 'Reconcilers' was Baxter's own preferred name for those moderate Presbyterians who, 'of no Sect or Party, but abhorring the very Name of Parties', sought to heal both ecclesiastical and theological differences.⁶⁴

Less important than the soteriological subtleties of reformed theology is the temper shared by Baxter, Howe and the 'Reconcilers' ('Baxterians', 'moderate Presbyterians' or 'Middle-way Men'⁶⁵) who formed a distinct and influential group in the Puritan, and subsequently nonconformist, tradition.⁶⁶ This defining temper emerged clearly in the sequel to Howe's publication. To the many dissenting divines who retained their allegiance to Calvinism in the later decades of the seventeenth century,⁶⁷ Howe's discussion of predestination affronted the very essence of reformed theology. Theophilus Gale - a London nonconformist minister and another former fellow of Magdalen College,

but, unlike Howe, a Calvinist and Congregationalist⁶⁸ - had since 1669 been publishing the successive volumes of his monumental *The Court of the Gentiles* (1669-78). In 1677 he took the occasion of their imminent publication to add to the end of books i and ii of Part IV of this work animadversions upon Howe's book, succinctly putting the essential Calvinist objection to any 'middle way': 'Either the Human Wil must depend on the Divine Independent Wil of God for al its natural motions and operations; or God must depend on the Human Wil in it self Independent, for al his Prescience, motives of Election, and all discrimination as to Grace and gratiose operations'.⁶⁹ Howe's response, in *A Post-Script to the Letter of the Reconcilableness of Gods Prescience, &c* (1677), only further incensed another defender of the Calvinist tradition, Thomas Danson.⁷⁰

In his *De Causa Dei: or, A Vindication of the Common Doctrine of Protestant Divines, concerning Predetermination* (1678), Danson is outraged by the slur cast on those 'Heroick Souls' of early Protestantism by Howe's dismissal of predestinarian arguments as contrary to sense and to religion. A commitment to predestination has hitherto been 'the constant sense of Protestantism, till now of late that it grows weary of it self, if we may judg of its present humour by Mr. H[owe] and Mr. B[axter]'; Howe's allowance of freedom to the human will 'borders as near upon Arminianism as Scotland does upon England'. Following 'the *Incomparable Calvin*', Danson argues strenuously that only the predetermination of all human actions answers to the supreme power of the deity.⁷¹ For Howe, God's amiableness rather than his omnipotence is what should most impress our minds and offer us reassurance when we are in theological difficulties.⁷² Danson, however, has the true Calvinist's determination to maintain whatever doctrinal consequence may be required the most effectively to exalt absolute sovereign power as

the deity's supreme attribute.⁷³ By 'Mr. H.'s Principles ... God is jostled out of his proper place; I mean, of being the first cause of all the Creatures actions, and the Creature put in his stead, as being represented able to use its powers, as it pleases ... how can God govern those actions which depend not immediately upon him in their production; nor are foreknown in his *Eternal Decree* ...?'⁷⁴

Danson's dogmatic intransigence and intemperate partisanship prompted an anonymous defence of Howe from no less a man than Andrew Marvell. In his *Remarks upon a Late Disingenuous Discourse Writ by One T.D. under the Pretence De Causa Dei* (1678)⁷⁵ he is (like Howe) for taking the commonsensical line and for restraining intellectual speculation: Genesis 'contains the plain History of Good and Evil, and ... what other Comment needs there, for what belongs to God, than that, Jam. 1.17 that it is from God only, *That every Good Giving, and every Perfect Gift descendeth?* And, as to Evil, that also of St. James, is sufficient conviction, *cap.1 v. 13, 14. Let no man say, when he is tempted, I was tempted of God; God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any man...*'. For him 'universal Predetermination' is a 'Notion ... altogether unrevealed' and 'contrary if not to the whole scope and design of Divine Revelation, yet to all common understanding and genuine sense of right Reason'.⁷⁶ As the reasonable, common-sensical intellectual temper of the *Remarks* accords with Howe's, so, too, does its religious bias – indeed, the two are indistinguishable. Elsewhere, Marvell expressed himself in thoroughly Baxterian terms: 'Truth for the most part lyes in the middle, but men ordinarily seek for it in the extremities'.⁷⁷ Just so, the *Remarks* counsels restraint and moderation against extremism, preferring co-operation to divisiveness.

This non-partisan emphasis, characteristic of moderate Presbyterianism,⁷⁸ is, we

may surmise, what prompted Marvell's intervention in the controversy. Danson's Calvinist intransigency is the mirror image of the episcopalian arrogance which, as exemplified by Samuel Parker, had provoked the mockery of Marvell's *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672). The effects of the latter were all too evident in the legislation of the 'Clarendon Code' and the persecution of nonconformists; but, to moderate Presbyterians, the former was as seriously damaging to the nonconformist cause for it prevented accommodation with the moderate, Latitudinarian wing of the Church of England. Here, the *Remarks'* preference for moderation in theology chimes with the preference for moderation in ecclesiology of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* and implies a similar political commitment to reconciliation. After the Restoration the political aspiration of Baxterianism remained the establishment of a comprehensive national church under a godly magistrate. This role now, of course, fell to Charles II, but Baxter, who had no time for the usurper Oliver Cromwell, had once, like Howe, had great hopes that Richard Cromwell might fulfil it.⁷⁹ Those hopes had been frustrated in 1659, so Baxter firmly believed, by the machinations of the Congregationalist leader John Owen,⁸⁰ the same Owen who, in the controversies over justification in the 1650s, had demonstrated those worrying antinomian tendencies. After the return of Charles, Owen remained unsympathetic to proposals for an imposed national church order. For him, and for others of Congregational persuasion (predominantly Calvinist in theology), separation of church and state, with toleration of gathered churches, was far preferable to comprehension, that is, incorporation within the established church. To Baxter's mind, Owen continued after the Restoration to present as much of an obstacle to church unity as he had been before 1660.

4. Defending Moderate Nonconformity

To moderate Presbyterians, high Calvinists thus threatened not only to open the floodgates of antinomian licence but to frustrate all hopes of good order in the commonwealth by their refusal to acknowledge the magistrate's authority in matters of religion or to promote a national church settlement. The kind of moderate accommodation which Baxter sought with John Wilkins, bishop of Chester, and John Tillotson, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, and which, in *Mr. Smirke* (1676), Marvell had defended on behalf of Herbert Croft, bishop of Hereford, was impossible with men for whom moderation and reasonableness were not the self-evident virtues they were to the Latitudinarians. They shared little with the Baxter who, in *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity* (1655) and *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1667) had anticipated Locke's more famous title, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695).

The contention between dogmatic Calvinist orthodoxy and what may be styled, if anachronistically, doctrinal liberalism, was to reappear after the accession of William and Mary, permanently to mark eighteenth-century dissent. Baxter welcomed the Glorious Revolution and the accession of William and Mary,⁸¹ and in *R. Baxters Sence of the Subscribed Articles of Religion* (1689) he gratefully accepted the provisions of the Act of Toleration. He had not, however, abandoned his old hopes: in *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (1691) he published 'a Summary of *Catholick* reconciling *Theology*'⁸² and he looked still towards a comprehensive national Protestant church, whose reformed character he defended *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (1691), that is, of Rome. Still, too, he sought to safeguard Protestant doctrine from antinomianism in *The*

Scripture Gospel Defended, and Christ, Grace and Free Justification Vindicated against the Libertines (1690).

The campaign against antinomianism was, however, at odds with the eirenical tendency of Baxter's other late works. The publication of *The Scripture Gospel Defended* was provoked by the republication in 1690 of the sermons of the antinomian Tobias Crisp (who had died in 1643) with a prefatory certificate attesting their authenticity signed by a number of Presbyterian dissenters (including Howe).⁸³ To Baxter's mind, by so doing they gave the work an authority and a respectability it did not deserve. This was the more galling since in his preface Crisp's son, Samuel, took the occasion to attack the 'Antichristian, Socinian, Pelagian, Arminian' views of those 'Persons of great Learning' who, preferring human reason to the evangelical doctrine of grace, had passed 'hard Censures' on his father's sermons.⁸⁴ They of course included Baxter. He was fundamentally convinced that unreason was the enemy of faith, not its condition: faith is the 'rational Act of a rational Creature'.⁸⁵ In defending Christianity, Baxter defended what was reasonable, no matter that this was to invite the charge 'of Socianisme, as over-magnifying Reason', witness *The Judgment of Non-conformists of the Interest of Reason in Matters of Religion* (1676), signed by himself and fourteen other 'Presbyterians' and published to counter the 'charge of unreasonableness' laid 'in special, on the *Non-conformists*' by conformists:

Objective Religion being the thing which *Reason* must discern, it is as vain to ask whether *Religion*, or *Reason* should be preferred, as to ask whether we should in seeing prefer the *Eye*, or the *Light*, or the *material Objects*, which must all concur to make one Act.⁸⁶

An immediate consequence was a doctrinal humility – even a skepticism – which eschewed dogmatism. To Baxter's mind, intellectual uncertainty is as much a part of the

human condition as is opinionative variety: ‘Things equally *true* are not equally *evident*, and revealed, and sure to us: some things in Nature are much clearer than others; and some parts of Scripture farr more intelligible than some others’.⁸⁷ It is no wonder that Baxter and the future archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson were long-standing friends, bound together not only by their commitment to a broadly based national church, but to the reasonable and moderate theology which would allow that church its all-embracing liberal character. Tillotson, no less than Locke, would have assented to the import of Baxter’s rhetorical question, ‘What more can be done to the disgrace and ruin of Christianity than to make the world believe we have no reason for it?’.⁸⁸

Upon this question dissent broke. When, following the Glorious Revolution, the Toleration Act of 1689 determined that an established church with tolerated dissent, rather than a comprehensive national church, was to be the ecclesiological shape of the future, renewed efforts to unite dissent led in 1690 to the establishment of a Common Fund for supporting ministers, churches and students, jointly managed by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and in 1691 to the publication of the *Heads of Agreement* for a co-operative association between the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers of London. This ‘Happy Union’ Baxter welcomed in *Church Concord* (1691) even though it spelled the end of his hopes of comprehension. However, no sooner had this agreement been reached than it was riven by the old division. In 1692 Daniel Williams, an admirer and friend of Baxter, one of his literary executors and the successor to Baxter’s place among the Merchants’ lecturers, entered the Crisp controversy with *Gospel-Truth Stated and Vindicated: Wherein Some of Dr. Crisp’s Opinions Are Considered*. This was written against those who ‘ignorantly set up the Name of Christ, and Free Grace, against

the Government of Christ, and the Rule of Judgement’ and speak of ‘the honour of Free Grace’ to the neglect of ‘Gospel-Rule’.⁸⁹ The immediate target was the fervent Congregationalist and Calvinist Richard Davis, in whose revivalist preaching Williams detected a recurrence of the antinomianism of Crisp. Since a number of Presbyterians (including Howe) put their names to a prefatory testimonial that in their judgment Williams had ‘rightly stated the *Truths* and *Errours*’ of the case, *Gospel-Truth* was easily construed as an attack by Presbyterians on Congregationalists. By 1695 the Union had foundered.⁹⁰

The following year Baxter’s posthumous *Reliquiae Baxterianae* appeared, edited by Matthew Sylvester. Sylvester, the man whose London ministry Baxter had shared during the last four-and-half years of his life, had been working on the edition since Baxter’s death in 1691, but despite his best efforts with ‘the great quantity of loose Papers’ left to him by Baxter, the resulting compilation is unskilfully structured and disorderly.⁹¹ This, however, does not detract from the apologetic forcefulness with which the work vindicates the Baxterian or moderate Presbyterian tradition in the seventeenth century, nor its championing of moderation, rationalism and catholicity.⁹² As such, it was destined to become a defining document in the dissenting tradition. Edmund Calamy, the third seventeenth-century divine of that name and grandson of the Smectymnuan, and Sylvester’s ministerial assistant from 1692 to 1695, had assisted Sylvester in preparing the *Reliquiae* for the press but, dissatisfied with the result, he conceived the idea of reworking the text as a third-person history of nonconformity.⁹³ Baxter’s name and the definitive record of the Bartholomeans thus became inextricably connected. It was Calamy who, in his *Abridgment of Mr. Baxter’s History of his Life and Times* (1702) and

its successors,⁹⁴ transformed Baxter's autobiographical papers into a history of nonconformity and a comprehensive record of the lives of ejected ministers. He was, however, doing something more. In his work on the *Reliquiae*, and in his own three-volume *Defence of Moderate Non-conformity* (1703-5), written against animadvertisers on the sympathetic portrayal of the Bartholomeans in the *Abridgment*, he passed the Baxterian tradition to the eighteenth century. While in the *Defence* Calamy has effectively abandoned Presbyterian aspirations towards a national church for an independent church polity (that is, for what he knows opponents will call 'a meer *Independent Scheme*'), he remains committed to toleration of varieties of individual opinion and practice. 'The Aim and Drift of our Holy Institution [of the Church], is not to bring Men to an exact Agreement and *Uniformity* in all Particulars' but to recognize that conscience, 'the Great Engine by which God hath maintain'd Religion in the World', cannot be coerced. No more 'is necessary to make a Man a member of the Church, than is necessary to make him a Good Christian'. There speaks Baxter's 'meer Christian'.⁹⁵

The consequence was a disinclination within eighteenth-century Presbyterian dissent to stigmatise any opinion as heresy. Orthodoxy was conceived less in doctrinal than in attitudinal and tonal terms of moderation, common sense and a liberalism that could accommodate a range of heterodoxies until, by the end of the century, the rationalism of the English Presbyterian tradition had become avowedly Unitarian.⁹⁶ This bias is nicely illustrated by an anecdote from Calamy's autobiography. He tells of a visit in 1709 to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland meeting in Edinburgh during which he attended an examination of a minister for unsound doctrine. When asked his opinion of the investigation, he replied 'We in England should reckon

this way of proceeding, the Inquisition revived'.⁹⁷ Not quite all in England, however: moderation and reasonableness may have become the mark of the Presbyterian tradition, but the demons of heresy would continue to haunt Calvinist Congregationalists throughout the eighteenth century.

NOTES

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- ¹ N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), letter 324 (hereafter cited as *CCRB*).
 - ² Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (1696), II.198, §51 (hereafter cited as *Rel. Bax.*; reference is to part, page and numbered section).
 - ³ Richard Baxter, *Catholic Unity* (1660), p. 332; *Richard Baxter's Catholick Theologie* (1675), sig. c3.
 - ⁴ *CCRB*, letter 592.
 - ⁵ Richard Baxter, *A Third Defence of the Cause of Peace* (1681), 'Answer to Hinckley', p. 110.
 - ⁶ Richard Baxter, *Church-History of the Government of Bishops* (1680), 'What History is Credible', sig. b1.
 - ⁷ *CCRB* , letter 899.
 - ⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Judgment and Advice of the Assembly of Associated Ministers of Worcestershire in Reply to John Dury's Proposals for Church Unity* (1658), in *CCRB*, letter 470.
 - ⁹ Richard Baxter, prefatory epistle to T[homas] D[oe]little], *The Protestant Answer to the Question, Where Was your Church before Luther?* (1678), in *CCRB*, letter 1021. The 'Vincentian Canon' cited by Baxter (with its first two elements

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- transposed) is from Vincent's *Commonitorium*, 2:3.
- ¹⁰ CCRB, letter 324 (square brackets in the original), with n.1.
- ¹¹ CCRB, letter 324; Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (1673), 1st pag., pp. 733-4.
- ¹² Baxter, *Judgment and Advice*, in CCRB, letter 470.
- ¹³ *Rel. Bax.*, II.197-8, §§51, 52.
- ¹⁴ For Biddle's career and unitarian views, see H. J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 163-217, and Nigel Smith's essay in the present volume, 'John Biddle and the Anti-Trinitarian Heresy in Seventeenth-Century England'.
- ¹⁵ William Riley Parker, *Milton: a Biography*, 2nd edn. rev. Gordon Campbell, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1: 394-5.
- ¹⁶ For Owen (1616-83), after the Restoration the leading Congregationalist among nonconformists, from 1673 ministering to a congregation meeting in Leadenhall Street, London, see Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: the Life and Work of John Owen* (Exeter, 1971).
- ¹⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1654*, p. 3 (2 Mar 1654).
- ¹⁸ William A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth, 1642-1660*, 2 vols. (London, 1900), 2: 80-2 n1; Toon, *God's Statesman*, pp. 83-6; Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament 1648-53* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 296.

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- ¹⁹ See on this reaction Carolyn Polizotto, 'The Campaign against *The Humble Proposals* of 1652', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 38 (1987), 569-81. Baxter was not directly involved in this committee's deliberations, but for the policy he wished to have recommended to it, and his reaction to the *Proposals*, see *CCRB*, letter 83.
- ²⁰ For the most recent and authoritative account of the occasion, scope and nature of the 1652 *Proposals* and the *Principles* see Michael Lawrence, 'Transmission and Transformation: Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Project 1600-1704' (Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 2002), pp. 144-65, which argues that far from being prescriptively partisan, they were a compromise document designed to define an acceptable doctrinal core around which the Puritan godly could unite.
- ²¹ John Milton, 'To the Lord General Cromwell', ll. 13-14, in John Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2nd edn. (London, 1997), pp. 328-9. See further Blair Worden, 'John Milton and Oliver Cromwell', in Ian Gentles, John Morrill and Blair Worden (ed.), *Soldiers, Writers and Statesmen of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 244-9; Toon, *God's Statesman*, pp. 85-6; Polizotto, 'Campaign', 571-2, 576-7.
- ²² *The Instrument of Government*, articles XXXV-XXXVII, in Samuel Rawson Gardiner (ed.), *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1906), p. 416.
- ²³ See on the inception of this sub-committee, the advisory group of divines and attendant discussions: *Rel. Bax.*, II.197-205, §§ 50-6; Lawrence, 'Transmission

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- and Transformation', pp. 166-70; Toon, *God's Statesman*, pp. 89-96; Wilbur Cortez Abbott (ed.), *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 4 vols. (1937-47; rpt. Oxford, 1988), 3:495; Shaw, *History of the English Church*, 2: 85-90.
- ²⁴ Baxter was nominated by Roger Boyle, Lord Broghill, as a substitute for Archbishop James Ussher who, because of his advanced age, declined to serve (*Rel. Bax.*, II.197, §50). For various lists of those who attended, see *CCRB*, letter 204, with nn. 3-8.
- ²⁵ *Rel. Bax.*, II.199, §55. For an examination of the sixteen-article confession produced by the group (*The Principles of Faith Presented by Mr. Tho. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, Mr. Sydrach Sympton and other ministers* (1654) which exists in only one known printed copy), see Lawrence, 'Transmission and Transformation', pp. 170-6, which again argues that, despite Baxter's characterization, it was a broad-based document designed to promote the unity of the godly. The confession was not adopted for, with the dissolution of Parliament on 22 January 1655 'all came to nothing, and that Labour was lost' (*Rel. Bax.*, II.205, §56).
- ²⁶ Richard Baxter, *Directions for Weak Distempered Christians to Grow up to a Confirmed State of Grace* (1669), pp. 89-90 (sigs. G8-G8v).
- ²⁷ Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, p. 19.
- ²⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Life of Faith*, 2nd edn enlarged (1670), p. 196.
- ²⁹ Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, pp. 17-18.

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- ³⁰ The niceties of reformed soteriology are teasing indeed, but for recent authoritative engagements which elucidate Baxter's thinking in the context of contemporary Calvinism, see Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot, 2001); Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer, 1993). They build on James I. Packer's 1954 Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 'The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter'. See also C. F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: the Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (New York, 1966).
- ³¹ [William Allen], *A Discourse of the Nature, Ends, and Differences of the Two Covenants* (1673), preface (by Baxter), sig. A2.
- ³² *Rel. Bax.*, I.50, §73..
- ³³ *Rel. Bax.*, I.51, §74.
- ³⁴ *Rel. Bax.*, I.56, §81.
- ³⁵ *Rel. Bax.*, I.111, §163.
- ³⁶ For a fuller account of Baxter's army experiences and their bearing on his theological views and on the *Aphorismes*, see Cooper. *Fear and Polemic*, pp. 87-121.
- ³⁷ Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), pp. 92, 118, 289, 290-1.
- ³⁸ *Rel. Bax.*, I.107, §156; Baxter, *Aphorismes*, appendix, pp. 137-45; *Rich. Baxter's*

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- Confession of his Faith* (1655), p. 289. On these exchanges, and the views argued, see Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 41-57, 103-24; Cooper, *Fear and Polemic*, pp. 122-34; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Richard Baxter's *Apology* (1654): Its Occasion and Composition', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 4 (1953), 69-76.
- ³⁹ John Owen, *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), appendix, pp. 7-10. On the relationship of Baxter's soteriology to that of Owen see Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology, 1640-1790: an Evaluation* (Oxford, 1990), passim; Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 103-8, 209-19 and passim; and Gavin J. McGrath, 'Puritans and the Human Will: Voluntarism within Mid-Seventeenth Century English Puritanism as seen in the Works of Richard Baxter and John Owen' (Durham Ph. D. thesis, 1989)
- ⁴⁰ N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987), pp. 40-1 (and see pp. 33-55 on the varieties of nonconformity and on the shared experience of persecution).
- ⁴¹ See Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence', in Geoffrey F. Nuttall and Owen Chadwick (eds.), *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962* (London, 1962), pp. 189-253; Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp. 55-67.
- ⁴² N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 122-4; Gary De Krey, 'Rethinking the Restoration: Dissenting Cases for Conscience, 1667-1672', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 53-83.
- ⁴³ In Roger Sharrock (gen. ed.), *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, 13 vols. (Oxford, 1976-94), 4: 1-130, where see T. L. Underwood's introduction for the

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- theological and controversial context. See also Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA, 2002), pp. 278-86.
- ⁴⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Scripture Gospel Defended* (1691), sig. A2.
- ⁴⁵ Richard Baxter, *How Far Holiness is the Design of Christianity* (1671), pp. 6, 15.
- On the contrasting doctrinal emphases of Bunyan and Baxter, see Isabel Rivers, 'Grace, Holiness and the Pursuit of Happiness: Bunyan and Restoration Latitudinarianism', in N. H. Keeble (ed.), *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus – tercentenary essays* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 45-69, and, more at large, in her *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, vol. 1: *Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, 1991), chapters 2 and 3 (esp. pp. 81-7).
- ⁴⁶ *Rel. Bax.*, III.103, §227.
- ⁴⁷ For biographical accounts of Howe (1630-1705), in 1662 ejected from the living of Great Torrington, Devon, appointed chaplain to Sir John Skeffington, 2nd Viscount Massarene in 1670, and from 1676 minister to a Presbyterian congregation meeting at Haberdashers' Hall, Staining Lane, London, see Henry Rogers, *The Life and Character of John Howe* (London, 1836) and Robert Horton, *John Howe* (London, 1895).
- ⁴⁸ For Danson (1629-94), ejected vicar of Sibton with Peasenhall, Suffolk, and from 1679 till 1692 minister to a congregation in Abingdon, Berkshire, see A. G. Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised* (1934; rpt Oxford, 1988), s.v.

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49. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. (London, 1962), 2:206 (Book III, chapter xxi, section 5), 221 (III. xii. 10); the point is further discussed at 2:256-8 (III.xxiv.17).
50. [John Howe], *The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels* (1677), p. 38.
51. [Howe], *Reconcilableness of God's Prescience*, pp. 143, 116.
52. [Howe], *Reconcilableness of God's Prescience*, pp. 119-20.
53. Calvin disavowed this inference from his doctrine: to it he devoted chapter I.xviii of the *Institutes*, and particularly its final section (1:198-205); see also III.xxiv.12-17 (2:251-8).
54. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:228-9 (III.xxiii.4).
55. The Calvinist *Belgic Confession* of 1561 (a version of the *Gallican Confession* of 1559, which was adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1619) affirmed that 'nothing happens in this world without his appointment; nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed'. In the English tradition, the Westminster Assembly's *Confession of Faith* (1647) similarly maintained that while 'God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established' (*Belgic Confession*, art. xiii (cf. *Gallican Confession*,

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- art. viii) and *Westminster Confession*, chap. III, sect. i, in Henry B. Smith & Philip Schaff (ed.), *Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (London, 1877), pp. 396, 364, 608).
56. [Howe], *Reconcilableness of God's Prescience*, pp. 39-40. For a full and authoritative discussion of Howe's theology, see David P. Field, "'Rigide Calvinisme in a Softer Dress': The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe (1630-1705)" (Cambridge Ph.D., 1994). Field discusses *The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience* on pp. 132-8.
57. William Perkins, *Of the Creede*, in *Workes*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1616-18), 1:295.
58. For Moïse Amyraut, his teaching and that of other preceptors of the Saumur academy, see Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scolasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison, Wisc., 1969); F. P. Van Stam, *The Controversy over the Theology of Saumur, 1635-1650* (Amsterdam, 1988).
59. For the relationship of 'hypothetical universalism' to Arminianism, see A. W. Harrison, *Arminianism* (London, 1937), esp. pp. 111-12, 160-1, and Alan Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Worthing, 1982), pp. 30-3.
60. *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), ded. ep. of the whole work, sig. A4^v. The Scot John Cameron (1579?-1625), professor successively at the academies of Sedan (1602-04) and Saumur (1618), initiated the distinctive theological emphasis of the Saumur school; Ludovicus Crocius was a professor at Bremen who represented Bremen at the Synod of Dort; the moderate divine Mathias Martini was rector of the

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- academy at Bremen from 1611 till his death in 1630; John Davenant (1576-1641) was bishop of Salisbury from 1621. Baxter defends his high regard for Amyraldus in *Certain Disputations of Right to Sacraments* (1657), pref., sigs. b1^v - c2^v. For a defence of himself against the charge that he overvalues 'Davenant & Amyraldus (& more Camero & Baronius [Robert Baron (1593?-1639)])', see *CCRB*, letter 148.
- ^{61.} Baxter, *Certain Disputations*, pref., sig. c1.
- ^{62.} *CCRB*, letter 376. For the relationship of Baxter's thinking to that of Amyraldus, see Boermsa, *Hot Pepper Corn*, pp. 197-200, 335-7.
- ^{63.} *Rel. Bax.*, III.182, §16; III.181, §13. For Baxter's own summary account of *Catholick Theologie*, see *CCRB*, letter 911.
- ^{64.} *Rel. Bax.*, II.387, §285(2)). See further Roger Thomas, 'The Rise of the Reconcilers', in C. G. Bolam *et al.*, *The English Presbyterians: from Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London, 1968), pp. 46-72.
- ^{65.} Cf. the titles of tracts by Baxter's friend John Humfrey: *The Middle-Way in One Paper of Justification with Indifferency between Protestant and Papist* (1672); *The Middle-Way in One Paper of Election & Redemption, with Indifferency between the Arminian and Calvinist* (1673); *The Middle-Way in One Paper of the Covenants, Law and Gospel, with Indifferency between the Legalist & Antinomian* (1674); *The Middle-Way of Perfection with Indifferency between the Orthodox and the Quaker* (1674).
- ^{66.} For a distinguishing of this group, see Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp. 8-10, 33-37, and

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- for a list of representative figures, with brief biographies, see Field, “‘Rigide Calvinisme’”, Appendix 1.
67. See Peter Toon, *Puritans and Calvinism* (Svengel, PA, 1973) and *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London, 1967).
68. For Gale (1628-79), ejected preacher at Winchester Cathedral, see Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised*, s.v.
69. Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles*, part IV, books i-ii (1677), p. 523. For some account of Gale's book, see Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp. 167-70, 184-6.
70. These exchanges prompted Baxter to publish ‘an antidote against the poison’ of Gale's arguments for predetermination, but ‘Mr. Gale fell sick, and I suppress my answer lest it should grieve him. (And he then died)’ (*Rel. Bax.*, III.182-3, §22). Baxter's unpublished reply, in two parts, the first ‘written twenty years ago’ against Hobbes and the second consisting of animadversions on Gale's *Court of the Gentiles*, with a preface dated 10 May 1679, is still extant in the Baxter Treatises in Dr. Williams's Library (Roger Thomas, *The Baxter Treatises: a Catalogue of the Richard Baxter Papers (other than the Letters) in Dr. Williams's Library*, Dr. Williams's Library Occasional Paper 8 (London: Dr. Williams's Library, 1959), p. 17).
71. [Thomas Danson], *De Causa Dei* (1677), sigs. A3v, A5, pp. 42, 44, 21.
72. The point is discussed in Field, “‘Rigide Calvinisme’”, pp. 121-31.
73. In one of the more scornful and heated passages of the *Institutes*, Calvin insists that

‘God claims omnipotence to himself, and would have us to acknowledge it, - not the vain, indolent, slumbering omnipotence which sophists feign, but vigilant, efficacious, energetic, and ever active, - not an omnipotence which may only act as a general principle of confused motion, as in ordering a stream to keep within the channel once prescribed to it, but one which is intent on individual and special movements. God is deemed omnipotent ... because ... he so overrules all things that nothing happens without his counsel ... there is no random power, or agency, or motion in the creatures, who are so governed by the secret counsel of God, that nothing happens but what he has knowingly and willingly decreed’ (1:173-5 (I.xvi.3)).

⁷⁴ [Danson], *De Causa Dei*, pp. 121-2.

⁷⁵ For a fuller discussion of this work, its place in this controversy, and the attribution to Marvell, see my introduction to the edition of the tract in Annabel Patterson *et al.* (ed.), *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, 2 vols. (New Haven & London, 2003), 2: 381-411, which is drawn on here.

⁷⁶ [Andrew Marvell], *Remarks upon a Late Disingenuous Discourse Writ by One T.D. under the Pretence De Causa Dei* (1678) in Patterson *et al.* (ed.), *Prose Works of Marvel*, 2: 416, 446.

⁷⁷ Andrew Marvell, *Short Historical Essay Touching General Councils, Creeds, and Impositions in Religion* appended to *Mr. Smirke* (1676), in Patterson *et al.* (ed.), *Prose Works of Marvel*, 2: 137.

⁷⁸ While his sympathies are with moderate nonconformity, there is no evidence that

Marvell was a member of any nonconformist congregation, or that he failed to attend his parish church. It is possible that he was an occasional conformist in order to qualify to sit as an M. P., but evidence is wanting: see Douglas Lacey, *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689* (Brunswick, NJ, 1969), pp. 15-21, 369-73. Marvell appears to settle the matter when, in the second part of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1673), he cautions his reader not 'impute any errors or weakness of mine to the Non-conformists, nor mistake me for one of them', though he adds that to be so mistaken would be no 'reproach' since he 'honour[s] the most scrupulous' of them (Patterson *et al.* (ed.), *Prose Works of Marvel*, 1: 267).

79. CCRB, letters 509, 515 (with references to the *Reliquiae* there given); William Lamont (ed.), *Baxter: A Holy Commonwealth* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. ix-xi.
80. CCRB, letter 575 (with references to the *Reliquiae* there given); William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (London, 1979), pp. 189, 220-21; Lamont (ed.), *Holy Commonwealth*, pp. xvi-xviii.
- 81 See his unpublished paper on 'King James his abdication of the crown plainly proved' (Thomas, *Baxter Treatises*, p. 24b).
- 82 *Rel. Bax.*, III.182, §16.
- 83 For an account of Crisp's theology see Christopher Hill, 'Dr. Tobias Crisp (16600-43)' in his *Collected Essays*, 3 vols. (Brighton, 1985-6), vol. 2: *Religion and Politics in 17th Century England* (1986), pp. 141-61.
- 84 Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted, Being the Compleat Works* (1690), 'To the

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- Christian Reader', sigs. A2-A2v.
- ⁸⁵ Richard Baxter, *The Poor Man's Family Book* (1674), 1st pag., p. 13.
- ⁸⁶ Richard Baxter et al., *The Judgment of Nonconformists of the Interest of Reason in Matters of Religion* (1676), pp. 1, 15.
- ⁸⁷ Baxter et al., *Judgment of Nonconformists*, p. 10.
- ⁸⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, 2nd edn. (1651), sig. 2d1v. On this bias in Baxter's thought, see N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 30-2.
- ⁸⁹ Daniel Williams, *Gospel-Truth Stated and Vindicated* (1692), preface, sigs. A2-A2v.
- ⁹⁰ For a fuller account of these events see Roger Thomas, 'Parties in Nonconformity' and 'Presbyterianism in Transition', in Bolam *et al.*, *English Presbyterians*, pp. 101-25.
- ⁹¹ *Rel. Bax.*, pref., sig. b1. For Sylvester see Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised*, s.v.
- ⁹² See further N. H. Keeble, 'The Autobiographer as Apologist: Reliquiae Baxterianae (1696)', in Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *The Literature of Controversy: Polemical Strategy from Milton to Junius* (London, 1987), pp.105-19.
- ⁹³ Edmund Calamy, *An Historical Account of My Own Life*, ed. J. T. Rutt, 2 vols. (1829), 1: 376-80.
- ⁹⁴ In the *Abridgment* the history was extended to 1691 (Baxter's text had trailed off

in the 1680s) and half the volume was given over to an expansion of Baxter's account of the ministers ejected in 1662. In the enlarged two-volume edition of 1713, this account received a volume to itself, and the history was extended to 1711; this was further augmented by the publication in 1727 of the two-volume *Continuation of the Account*.

⁹⁵ Edmund Calamy, *A Defence of Moderate Non-conformity*, 2 vols. (1703-5), 1: viii, 2: 2-3, 86-7. See further J. T. Spivey, "'Middle-Way Men': Edmund Calamy and the Crisis of Moderate Nonconformity (1688-1732)", Oxford D. Phil thesis (1986).

⁹⁶ Bolam et al., *English Presbyterians*, pp. 178-86, 197-208, 226-35.

⁹⁷ Calamy, *Own Life*, 2: 155-6.