

CHAPTER III.

BAXTER'S THEOLOGY.

In writing an essay on Baxter, it would be as wrong to omit his Theology, as it would be to omit philosophy in an essay on Bacon, or epic poetry in one on Milton. It was his theology that brought upon him assaults and onslaughts from all sects and divisions of the militant church in his own age. It is on account of his theology that a deep, strong, and general prejudice is cherished and expressed to this day. In fact, it is his theology that constitutes his individuality in History. By Baxter, every divine means Baxter's theology. As by Melancthon, one means the "Communes Loci;" and by Calvin, the "Institutes;" so by Baxter, the theological reader means "the Aphorisms on Justification," and the devotional reader means, "the Saint's Rest;" or "the Reformed Pastor."

It is not likely that this volume will come into the hands of any one reader who has not some lurking and undefined prejudice against Baxter, and that solely on account of his theology. To render this volume, therefore, useful to such a reader, it is necessary that some notice should be taken of Baxter's Theology.

In theological science Baxter was a THINKER. He did not satisfy himself with reading and collecting the thoughts of other divines, but he thought out their thoughts, and he digested their master doctrines, until they gave him strength and stature, and be-came part and parcel of his own gigantic mind. Some minds, like the bookworm, penetrate through musty volumes and ponderous tomes; and in their progress they devour syllables, words, and even whole sentences, but they themselves do not grow one cubit in thought. A living, thinking mind is not so. Whenever the thoughts of others get a lodgement in a healthy mind, as seed in a fertile soil, they produce other thoughts, and these thoughts are that mind's own thoughts, its own produce, and its own seed for a further harvest. This was the case with Baxter. He roamed through the varied domains of thought, and schoolmen, and divines, and collected the thoughts of others more exclusively and successfully, perhaps, than any theologian of his age:—but he had also thoughts of his own, thoughts which had all the vigour and raciness of the Baxterian mind, and these thoughts he worked out with a power, and independency, and a courage, which entitle him to all the distinction of an original Theologian.

In the breadth and the depth of theology as a science, Baxter had no divine of his age that surpassed him: perhaps the truth would warrant the assertion, that in breadth and depth, he had none equal to him. USHER was probably equal to him in the depth of theological dogmatics, and surpassed him in general knowledge. JEREMY TAYLOR was equal to him in the breadth of scholastic literature, and surpassed him in the brilliancy of amassed thoughts. But in both length and breadth, neither of them surpassed him; for every theological reader will allow that Baxter is more profound than Taylor, and more comprehensive than Usher. Among the Non-conformists, also, there were many who excelled him in some things; as Owen in Greek exegesis, Howe in loftiness of thought, Goodwin in evangelical savour, and Flavel, in gentle sweetness; but none of them equalled him in all.

His only real rival among the Nonconformists was Dr Owen; and it is a fact that, among religious parties two centuries ago, and among the evangelical readers of our own day, Owen was, and has been, a far greater favourite than Baxter. One of the most remarkable circumstances in this fact is that, even with Arminian divines, the Calvinistic Owen is in far greater acceptance than the eclectic Baxter. The reason is, that Owen studied the Christology of Redemption more than Baxter; and Baxter studied the Anthropology of salvation more than Owen. Owen exhibits with much richness and amplitude what Christ did for the redemption of man. Baxter takes all this for granted, and, taking his position at the cross of Christ, addresses a "Call to the Unconverted;" and explains and enforces the obligations of redeemed man to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son. The cold reception of Baxter, and the warm acceptableness of Owen, therefore, with Arminian divines, are curious phenomena in the philosophy of theological parties. Arminians have forgiven Owen's "limited redemption," on account of his "Glory of Christ," and "Communion with God;" but they have never forgiven Baxter's "Personal Election," for the sake of his "General Redemption," and his "Saint's Everlasting Rest."

The violent unkindness with which Baxter's theology was treated by the divines of his own age, and of his own communion, is not peculiar to his contemporaries: it is the fate of theological enterprise in all ages. He seems to have suffered as much of odium and annoyance from his brethren on account of his doctrinal theology, as he suffered of reproach and persecution from the Episcopalian Royalists, on account of his ecclesiastical politics. Some indeed who disliked his theology, opposed it with honesty and plain speaking, chastened by kindness. Such were BLAKE, of Tamworth, in a postscript attached to his "Covenant Sealed;" BURGESS, of Sutton Goldfield, in his "True Doctrine of Justification," and GEORGE LAWSON, the able author of "Theopolitica," a work whose merit has never yet been appreciated by the theological student. Other opponents treated him with harshness and insulting severity. Such were KENDALL in his work on "Perseverance;" EYRE, of Salisbury, in his "Treatise on Justification;" CRANDON, of Fawley, in his "Baxter's Aphorisms exorcised and authorized;" and especially by Thomas Edwards, in his "Baxterianism Barefaced." Nor is Dr Owen to be left out of this last enumeration, as is evident from the close of his tract "On the Death of Christ," &c. attached to his "Vindiciae Evangelicae." The theological character of all his opponents is given by Baxter with one stroke of his pen. "The animadvertisers," he says, "were of several minds; and what one approved, the other confuted, being farther from each other than any of them were from me."

To theologians of any class, it is a great dishonour; but to Protestant theologians, whose very existence is a standing protest against intellectual slavery, it is a flagrant shame, that they should cherish in themselves, and promote in each other, a disposition to decry any spirit that appears among them claiming the right of thinking with his own mind, seeing with his own eyes, and speaking with his own lips. Why should they act thus? The God of mind, like the God of nature, is the God of variety. In variety there must necessarily be a series and a collection of individualities; for where there is no distinctive individuality, there can be no va-

riety, but only uniformity. To every germ of life “God hath given it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body; and every flesh is not the same flesh.” In like manner, to every rational being, “God giveth it a mind and mental powers as it hath pleased him; and to every mind its own form, and its own mode of producing thought; and all thought is not the same thought.” Why, then, should theologians wish to destroy this beautiful variety in the intellectual system? Who has given them authority to interfere with this variety? Who are they themselves who claim this right to interfere? Have they any divine right to differ from a man like Baxter, which a man like Baxter has not to differ from them? Are not they themselves, as well described above, farther from each other, than any of them are from him?

It is unlovely to see thinking men trying to murder every fresh produce of thought. It is unmanly and ungenerous to attempt to quench a man’s reason by wounding his feelings. It is the meanness of dastard imbecility to try to check the progress of his doctrine by Parthian javelins at his official position or his professional reputation. Yet this is the odium theologicum. If men, in the affairs of every-day life, are to exercise forbearance towards each other because they are in the flesh; the same forbearance is incumbent on theologians towards their brethren in intellectual struggles, since they themselves see but in a glass darkly. The men who are known in ecclesiastical history as heretics, would probably have never proceeded to the extreme errors with which their names are associated, had it not been for the intellectual tyranny, and the dogmatic despotism, of their contemporary theologians. Had a little intellectual liberty been allowed to the inquiring spirit, and had the new thinker been treated with gentle concern and affectionate warning, instead of with reserve, rudeness, and barbarity, the powerful mind would have been preserved to the church and to the interests of truth. Spontaneous thoughts and doctrines are tender and vital matters to a thinking mind. When, therefore, any luxuriant thoughts which may sprout from the vigorous roots of a healthy mind are wrenched off by the hand of a ruthless orthodoxy, the heart’s blood will respond to the barbarity, and as in the tree of Virgil,

—“Quae prima solo ruptis radicibus arbos
Vellitur, huic atro liquuntur sanguine guttae,
Et terram tabo maculant.”

One is tempted to ask, which is the most unchristian and most dangerous to Christianity—the freedom of speculation which proves all things that it may hold the more fast that which is good; or the ungenerous, illiberal, and persecuting spirit with which the opponents treat the author of that speculation? Yet, the inquirer is suspected, and the bigot is canonized. Why, in the very temple of truth itself, God still speaks “in divers manners:” yea, in the very tones of truth, we are to expect harmony, but not unison. The discussion of truth and the agitation of doctrines have always resulted in good to the Church, and to the world. Even the waters of Bethesda, in the very house of Mercy itself, needed to be agitated and disturbed to renew their healing power. It is, therefore, unseemly in theologians, that when some “Doctor Angelicus” descends among them, and agitates the settled waters of their dull and stagnant orthodoxy, then always “a great multitude of

impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered,” creep from the “five points” of their “five porches” to brandish their crutches against the intruder, or to mutter their anathemas against the innovation, instead of welcoming the benignant visitor, sharing in the healthiness of the agitation, and becoming healed of whatsoever disease they had. Such an angel was Baxter, and such was the treatment of his wholesome and healing agitation of the waters of orthodoxy; and such will always be the treatment of theological agitations until intellectual liberty become an acknowledged law in the republic of literature.

Baxterianism was treated in the eighteenth century much as Baxter himself was treated by his contemporaries in the seventeenth. In the eighteenth century, ultra-Calvinism was rampant among the Baptist and Independent churches; and even in Episcopal churches, where there was Calvinism at all, it was inclined to ultraism, as may be instanced in Romaine and Toplady. This retreating from Baxterianism to the extreme borders of Calvinism may be accounted for by the pernicious influence which professed Baxterianism exerted on its avowed adherents. These professed disciples of Baxter gradually forsook the *via media* of their master, and travelled to Arminianism; and thence, after some progress through Arianism, became at last settlers in Socinianism. From a survey of these painful consequences, many sound Calvinists hated Baxterianism, and asked, “Can any good thing come from Kidderminster?” The result was, that a blind and blinding prejudice against Baxter prevailed everywhere in England, and especially in Scotland and Wales.

A startling instance of the force and extent of this bigoted prejudice is given in Mr Philip of Maberly’s lively “Essay on the Genius, Works, and Times of Baxter,” attached to Virtue’s beautiful edition of “Baxter’s Practical Works” in three volumes. A private gentleman, who was an elegant scholar and a good theologian, seeing the destructive influence of hyper-Calvinism upon personal piety, as well as upon theological science, resolved to try to soften down the asperities of controversy by introducing among the controversialists the matured thoughts and strong arguments of some master-mind in Israel. Agreeably to this method, he contrived to take the public by guile, and he published the opinions of “an author of the seventeenth century.”

“It is hardly credible,” says Mr Philip, “but it is true, that so lately as the close of the last century, specimens of the best of Baxter’s arguments on the great points at issue between Calvinists and Arminians, were brought before the public without his name, that they might be read without prejudice, and make their own impression, before the author could be discovered. This was done by ELI BATES, Esq., in a volume entitled, ‘Observations on some important Points in Divinity, &c. &c., extracted from an author of the seventeenth century.’ Even in the second edition of this volume, in 1811, Baxter’s name is not given in the title-page, nor allowed to appear even in the preface. The fact is, Bates was too proud of Baxter’s theology to peril it at once upon his name. He knew his peculiarities, and could not forget the odium they once excited.”—“The dexterous bait took. Not a few Calvinists found out that there was an old and powerful writer whom the Arminians could not claim, and would not quote, for themselves, even although he fought their battle at some of its hottest points, and still more, Arminians dis-

covered that Calvinism did not necessarily limit the call of the Gospel, nor subvert the free agency of man.”

During the eighteenth century, the dissenting ministry in Britain were divided into Calvinists and Baxterians. Through the disrepute into which the Arians and others brought the name of Baxterianism, many divines, who were Baxterians in theological sentiments, renounced the name; and since the commencement of the nineteenth century, they have preferred being called “Moderate Calvinists.” The moderate Calvinists of the present century are in fact only the Baxterians of the preceding age. This change in the name is owing to the influence of the writings of President Edwards, of Andrew Fuller, and of Dr Williams. The “Fullerism” of the sage of Kettering, and the “Modern Calvinism” of Dr Williams, would, in the eighteenth century, have been called Baxterianism. When the disciples of Baxter are called Baxterians, it is not meant that they ever formed a distinct sect, or separate party, in the Christian Church. Instead of being, like the Wesleyans for instance, formed into a distinct body, they were, and are, more like the friends of Arminius, scattered among different societies, and found among all communities. Though the denomination “Baxterian,” as the badge of a theological party, is likely to become extinct, the party itself will always exist, as long as Arminianism will have any tendency to Pelagianism, and Calvinism have any bias towards Antinomianism.

This account of the treatment of Baxter and his Theology has probably excited the reader to wish to know what Baxterianism is. Baxterianism is, in theology, what eclecticism is in philosophy. It is a method of philosophizing, and, if the word be allowed, of theologizing, which seizes upon theological truth, in whatever system that truth may be found; and which gathers and appropriates to itself every truth, simply because it is truth. The theology of Baxter is distinguished from others by four peculiarities,—by its method of systematizing the doctrines of Revelation; its adoption of universal Redemption in harmony with personal Election; its theory of Justification by faith; and its theoretical and practical assertion of the agency of man in conversion.

The method which Baxter adopted for systematizing the doctrines of theology may be called Triadism, or what he himself calls “Trichotomizing.” The meaning is, that as all the works and dispensations of God are the productions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, some *vestigia Trinitatis*, some evidences of triplicity, or some marks of triadism, may be expected to discover themselves in all the phenomena of the divine operations. Those who understand what Monadism was to Plato and Leibnitz, and what Tetractysm was to the Pythagoreans, will be prepared to comprehend what triadism was to Baxter. It is his starting point, the principle from which he sets out, the where-to-stand of Archimedes, or, what the German philosophers call his stand-punkt, his stand-point.

The whole of his Latin Body of Divinity called “METHODUS THEOLOGIAE,” is arranged according to this method. At the close of his “Counsels to Young Men,” published in 1682, he gives the following account of his method of arrangement in the “Methodus.” “It consists of seventy-three tables, or methodical schemes, pretending to a juster methodizing of Christian verities according to the matter and Scripture, than is yet extant; furnishing men with neces-

sary distinctions on every subject; shewing that trinity in unity is imprinted on the whole creation, and [that] trichotomizing is the just distribution in naturals and morals." This trinal method was a decided favourite, it was almost a passion with him. He saw triadism every where. As in the Godhead he saw Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so he perceived that in God's relations to the world, he was Creator, Ruler, and Benefactor,—in the soul of man he saw power, will, and intellect,—in the divine dispensations towards man, he saw nature, grace, and glory,—in salvation he saw the Father as Rector or Ruler, the Son as Redeemer, the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier,—and in the Grace of the Spirit he saw faith, hope, and charity.

To those who delight to watch some great mind at some important work, the practical application of this method to philosophy and theology, must be as interesting as to see a painter plying his pencil and colours, or the sculptor his hammer and chisel. The perspicacity necessary for detecting the trinal "primalities" as they develop themselves in the phenomena of the universe, the skill to analyse them and place them in proper arrangement, and the extent of knowledge requisite to combine all these triads in one complete whole and one grand unity, demand an intellect that is quick, adroit, and comprehensive. The great drawback from the glory of the whole process is, that the effort is not so useful as it is clever and amusing. As an intellectual exercise on the plains of speculation, it is pleasing not only because it is playful, but because also it is a wholesome discipline in the gymnastics of mind. But, as a system of methodizing, it is so hypothetical, so conjectural, and sometimes so phantastic. But it is of no use either to practical religion or to theological science. The English reader will find how Baxter employs this method, in his "Catholick Theologie," printed in 1675, but presented more succinctly in his "End of Controversies," printed in 1691.

Baxter's doctrine of universal Redemption in harmony with personal Election, can scarcely be called Baxterianism. Yet as far as English theology is concerned, it is one of the most distinctive characteristics of Baxterianism. This doctrine was, in fact, the theology of the French Calvinists, especially of CAMERO, AMYRALDUS, and DALLAEUS. Baxter seems to have read the works of the French divines thoroughly, and therefore, upon this subject, English Baxterianism is nothing but what might be called Amyraldism, or French Cameronianism. In his theory of Redemption, Baxter differed from most, if not from all of the Calvinistic theologians in England.

First, He asserted that the Atonement, or Satisfaction of Christ, did not consist in his suffering the identical punishment which was due to mankind from an offended law. This he expressed in the language of the schools, by saying that Christ did not suffer the *idem* threatened in the penalty, but the *tantundem*, or the equivalent. In plain English, the theory means, that the curses of the law were due to men for their sins,—that Christ became a substitute for men,—that the law could inflict no curse upon an innocent Substitute,—and that the Lord did not suffer the curses of the law, but answered "the end of the law," by suffering what would have the same effect in moral government, as if he had endured the identical punishment threatened.

Secondly, he asserts that Christ rendered this *tantundem*, or endured these equivalent sufferings, with the design of furnishing an honourable consideration, or safe ground, for proclaiming pardon and offering salvation to every human being. This means that Christ died for sins and not for persons.

Thirdly, he asserts, that while the benefits of this substitutionary atonement are accessible and available to all men for their salvation, they have, in the divine appointment, a special reference to the subjects of personal election; that is, Christ is an atoning Ransom, and is “the Saviour of all men, but specially of them that believe.” This third assertion is the head and front of Baxter’s offending. By admitting universal redemption, he offended the Calvinists; and by admitting personal election, he offended the Arminians.

Had Baxter satisfied himself with admitting these two doctrines into his system without attempting to harmonize them, he would have acted the part of a humble believer, and of a philosophic theologian, and would besides have spared himself much polemic obloquy and persecution. Great faith is believing a great truth. He is greatest in faith who believes the greatest truths, and the greatest number of truths; and he is complete in faith who believes all truth. Upon this principle, Baxter believed that he found the two truths, general redemption and personal election, in the Book of truth, and therefore he admitted them into his system of theology. And why not? He was charged with admitting discrepancies and contradictions; and the charge was apparently true. To this charge every believer is subject. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred believe what are called contradictions; and the hundredth man is one who either doubts everything, or examines nothing. These two principles are not contradictions because men call them so: they may, in the realities of the case, be verities in the most perfect harmony, though our faculties are not adequate to the task of reconciling them. The office of Reason, in reference to all truths presented to it, is to examine them and believe them. It is never called upon first to reconcile them, or, if it fail in that, then to reject them. In no portion of the Scripture does God enjoin upon his servants the obligation to harmonize his truths; for that is his work, and not theirs: it is theirs to believe that he has harmonized them before they were revealed and announced.

Baxter attempted to reconcile these two doctrines by a theory much in vogue in his time, of Common Grace and Special Grace: but that theory was as inconsistent and contradictory as that of Universal Redemption and Special Salvation was supposed to be. That theory was, that if any man made a proper use of common Grace, God would then give him saving Grace. Baxter illustrates this with the metaphor of a house with two stories; and says, that if man would use common Grace to come up the first flight of stairs, God would give him saving Grace to ascend the second flight, and thus enter the higher department. He does not say what this common grace is, why it is called common; nor does he distinguish it from what was afterwards called natural ability, which, as an element essential to accountableness, is a matter of Justice, and not of Grace. Indeed, the whole hypothesis seems to be proposed rather to justify the damnation of the sinner than to aid him in his salvation. It must therefore be confessed that Baxter, in his efforts at reconciliation, did not meet the question fairly and fully. His theory is, that all the elect are sure to be saved; and that those who are non-elect may be saved, if

they believe the Gospel. The question which he had to solve was this: Will any of the non-elect believe, and be actually saved? This question he could not meet, because the Scriptures record no instance of such a circumstance.

This difficulty is produced, not by the evidence of the two truths, Universal Redemption and Personal Election, as independent doctrines, but by the attempt to reconcile them. The reasoning of Baxter, stripped of its scholastic form, would probably be embodied in the following statement: That the number of the finally saved, who will be at the right hand of Christ in the last day, is foreknown, and therefore fixed, is indisputable; and that Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, and for the sins, not of the elect only, but also for the sins of the whole world, and that the call to accept his salvation is sincerely addressed to all men, are equally indisputable: why then not admit both? Theologians who believe in general Providence, believe also in special Providence. What is special Providence but the application of the principles and means of general Providence to special cases? It is thus that "all things" in general Providence "work together for good," specially "to them that love God." In the same manner, a theologian may admit Universal Redemption and Special Redemption, since Special Redemption is only the application of the benefits and provisions of general redemption to special cases; it is Christ being generally the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.

In fine, Baxter believed that a certain and fixed number of saved men was determined in the decree about Redemption, without any reference to their faith as the ground of their election. Here he was a decided Calvinist of the Dordt School. He also believed that the divine decrees contemplate no Reprobation of any, but a universal redemption for all who will accept it, since Christ died for all. Here he was a decided Arminian. He admitted both doctrines to be true, and this gave to his theology the name of Baxterian.

A third distinctive peculiarity of Baxter's theology was his theory of Justification by Faith. His theory was, that in justification of a sinner, it is not the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to him, but his own actual faith. In explaining his theory, it is necessary to state the hypothesis which he had to attack. The majority of the Calvinistic divines of his day believed in, what was called, the imputation of Christ's active righteousness to the believer. It was presented in this manner. The law said "Do this and live." The sinner could not "do this" perfectly; therefore he must die. Jesus Christ "did this," or obeyed the law instead of the sinner, both as his substitute and as his representative, and therefore the law could not again say to the sinner "do this," since it had been done for him by his representative. In this theory the sinner is accounted as if he had obeyed the law, i.e. what Christ had done as his representative is accounted as having been done by himself, and therefore the law could not ask him twice. This opened a way direct to all the heights, moors, and bogs of Antinomianism; for the inference was unavoidable that, if Christ rendered to the law all the active obedience which was due to it from the believer, the law could not ask him for any more obedience; that is, Christ obeyed the law that the believer might not obey it. To hedge off this tremendous precipice some divines introduced the hypothesis of a distinction be-

tween the law as a Covenant of Works and as a Rule of Life, which they borrowed from COCCEIUS.

To counteract the above opinions, Baxter sought to establish, in harmony with many of the Fathers, and of the divines of the Reformation, that, in justification, the active righteousness of Christ was not at all imputed, but only the faith of the believer in the Righteousness of Christ. In this statement he deemed himself firmly sustained by the express language of Scripture, and by the literal exegesis of the passages in which “faith” was found in connexion with “justification,”—e. g. Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3, 5, 9, 23-24. All these passages, he argued, show that the doctrine of Paul was, that it was “faith,” and not the active righteousness of Christ, that was imputed for justification. In opposition to this interpretation, Dr Owen and others argued, that by the word “faith” here, the Apostle meant the object of faith, viz. the righteousness of Christ. Baxter contended that such a gloss was against all honest exegesis of the passages, and against the logical argument of the Apostle. “If it be not faith indeed,” he says, “that the Apostle meaneth, the context is so far from relieving our understandings, that it contributeth to our unavoidable deceit and ignorance. Read over the texts, and put but ‘Christ’s righteousness’ every where instead of the ‘faith,’ and see what a scandalous paraphrase you will make.” This was honest and manly dealing, and warranted by the context. As an example of this absurdity, read Rom. iv. 9, as Baxter suggests—“We say that the object of his faith, the righteousness of Christ, was counted to him for righteousness.” This “object of his faith could not be his, until it was imputed to him; but it is evident that he exercised his faith before the imputation. Besides, as if the Apostle wished to speak more explicitly, he says, in verse 22, that by “faith,” he did not mean the “object of faith,” but the act of “believing” in him, “who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead.”

Faith is believing. Justifying faith is believing a justifying truth. God informed Abraham that all the nations of the earth should be blessed, i.e. pardoned and saved on account of his seed, the Messiah. Abraham witnessed this saving and justifying truth, and his believing it in the saving character of his Seed, was counted to him for righteousness, or a justifying faith. It was a proper, a just, and a right thing that Abraham should believe God’s testimony concerning the Messiah, and therefore it was imputed to him as a right thing, or as a righteousness. The Owenian divines objected that in this shewing, faith was an act, and therefore a work, which would imply justification by works. And that such an act or work implied merit, and therefore did not, like the gospel justification, exclude boasting. It would be now too tedious to enter fully upon these objections. Let it suffice just to state that the objection is a play upon the word “work”—that believing in a substitute is no “work of law”—that faith is only an act of compliance with the gospel method of justification, and that no human being is ever conscious that there is any merit whatever in believing a true statement.

The fourth, and which was regarded by some as the most offensive peculiarity of Baxter’s theology, was his doctrine that every sinner has a distinct agency of his own to exert in the process of his conversion. Among his works there is no separate treatise on human ability or free agency; but in all his works he either

asserts or assumes that every man has power to do his duty. The most lengthened investigation of the difficulties of this question is found in his “Catholic Theologie,” in the Dialogues on original sin, free will, and effectual grace. In “the Sixth day’s Conference on natural corruption and impotency,” he puts to his antagonist the following questions, which are all answered by being conceded.

1. Have not wicked men natural life? or are they dead?
2. Have they not natural powers or faculties for natural acts?
3. Is it not the same natural faculty of intellection by which we understand and believe things common and (things) spiritual? And the same natural faculty of willing, by which we love or will them both?
4. (This is about common grace).
5. Is there any nation or people in the world that are not obliged by God to use some means towards their own conversion, and to forbear their sin?
6. Is there not such a thing in the world as a true power to do something that never is done, and forbear what is not forborne? This puzzles the antagonist, but Baxter proceeds to demonstrate it: and then on “the Eleventh day’s Conference” he rallies him and asks—“Would you not have your wife, children, and servants taught that it is their duty to love, honour, and obey you? and your neighbours to deal justly with you? and the rulers to protect you, and the judges to do you justice?”

The antagonist replies—“I speak only of religious, and not civil duties.”

ANSWER. “You are indifferent, it seemeth, as to the interests of God’s honour and man’s salvation. Let those alone, so be it your own interest be secured. Duty to you must be preached, but not to God. But would you not have them taught to do you service as to the Lord, and as such as from him shall have punishment and reward? Should not all be done to the glory of God?”

All intellectual philosophers avow the doctrine that man has power to command his own attention; and no theologian can dispute it. This power to command his own attention, or “power over his own will,” in man, is called, in doctrinal theology, “the self-determining power of the will.” Baxter assumed this in all his writings, and in all his sermons, and especially in the two works embodied in this little volume.

The “Call to the Unconverted” takes for granted, in every page, that man “hath power over his own will.” Indeed, no work has ever been written on conversion, and no work can be written on the subject, which does not imply that man acts voluntarily, whether in accepting or in rejecting the calls of the Gospel. The leading doctrines in the “Call to the Unconverted” are the following:—That the wicked must either turn and be converted, or perish,—that the wicked, whoever they are, shall be saved if they will only turn,—that God is pleased in their conversion, but displeased in their damnation,—that God is sincere in this pleasure, and has confirmed it by oath,—that God importunes men to be converted,—that he reasons with the wicked, and asks them to account for their non-conversion,—and that the blame of their being unconverted is not to be attached to any secret decree in God, but entirely to their own obstinacy.

It is true that his views of free-agency were not very clear or distinct; but the only thing that clouded them was the misty theory of common grace and saving

grace. This is evident from the manner in which he meets the following objections to the wicked being called to turn:—

“OBJECT.—But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace. It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy.”

“ANS. 1.—God hath two degrees of mercy to show; the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last. The latter he will give to none but those that will and run, and hath promised to them only. The former is to make them willing that were unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn, if you were but truly willing; and if your wills themselves were so corrupted that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of means, and not neglect it, or set against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.”

“OBJECT: —But you seem to intimate all the while that man hath free-will.”

“ANS.—The dispute about free-will is beyond your capacity. I shall therefore trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty; but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; but that is the wickedness of it which deserveth punishment.”

Whatever may be our sentiments concerning Baxter’s theory of human agency in conversion, it is evident that Dr Owen could not, on his principles, write a “Call to the Unconverted.” This theory gave a character to Baxter’s mind and to Baxter’s preaching. It is probable that it was the very characteristic that arrested the attention of Archbishop Usher, who suggested to him his adaptation to write works of this description. In the preface he gives a detailed account of Usher’s conversation with him on the importance of producing such a work. The work was not commenced till after the death of the venerated Archbishop, and was published on December 11, 1657. It is introduced by a very serious address “to all unsanctified persons who shall read this book, especially my hearers in the parish of Kidderminster.” Of its remarkable and extensive usefulness, he gives the following account:—

‘God hath blessed it with unexpected success beyond all the rest that I have written, except the ‘Saint’s Rest.’ In a little more than a year, there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since, besides many thousands by stolen impressions, which poor men stole for lucre’s sake. Through God’s mercy, I have had information of almost whole households converted by this small book, which I set so light by: and, as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were not mercy enough to me, God since I was silenced, hath sent it over on his message to many beyond the seas. For when Mr Elliot had printed all the Bible in the Indian’s language, he next translated this my ‘Call to the Unconverted.’* * * “Mr Stoop, the pastor of the French church in London, being driven hence by the displeasure of his superiors, was pleased to translate it into elegant French, and print it in a very curious letter: and I hope it will not be unprofitable there, nor in Germany, where it is printed in Dutch.”