

The Autobiography of a ‘Meer Christian’: Richard Baxter’s Account of the Restoration

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While undertaking research recently for a book on the ejection and persecution of the puritans from the Church of England in 1662,¹ I had the pleasure of reading a first edition copy of Richard Baxter’s autobiography. The aim of this article is to assess the value of *Reliquiae Baxterianae* published in 1696 as a source for the history of the Restoration religious settlement, and to examine Baxter’s agenda and bias. Though this decisive religious settlement underwent various legislative alterations and was enforced with differing degrees of severity during the reign of Charles II, its essential foundations were laid in 1660–1662. It is to these decisive years that we will, therefore, particularly confine our attention. Baxter’s account is illuminating at this point both personally and historically, and gives us an important insight into the mindset of those who were ejected from the national church in the seventeenth century. For all its prolix verbosity, it remains a ‘must read’.

Comparing Baxter to Other Contemporary Sources

To begin with, it is instructive to compare Baxter’s account of the Restoration with other contemporary sources. Debates in the Lords and Commons from this period ‘are among the most badly reported in all seventeenth-century parliaments’; even the ‘government’s own newspapers preferred rather to suppress information than to disseminate it’.² Where evidence exists of intra-governmental discussion and skirmishing at court ‘it is usually to be found in the least trustworthy sources: the fading memories and anecdotes of retired politicians, or the gossip of men only on the fringes of the court’.³

Among the most valuable contemporaneous accounts are those from Edward Hyde (Duke of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor),⁴ Gilbert Burnet (historian and later Bishop of Salisbury),⁵ and Samuel Pepys (Government administrator and famous diarist).⁶ As Seaward points out, however, ‘Burnet spent most of the early 1660s in Scotland or abroad: his *History of my own time* relies for this period on second-hand information and, written in the 1680s, the rather

simplistic views of early Restoration politics which it contains are heavily influenced and distorted by later events'.⁷ Burnet himself admits his all too limited perspective when he writes that for the first twelve years of Charles II's reign, 'I had only such a general knowledge of the affairs of England as I could pick up at a distance'.⁸

Pepys often has invaluable information from men close to the court, and was indeed 'the most informative' of English diarists.⁹ Yet his own rise to prominence at the heart of English politics did not really occur until after 1662, and especially (given his role as a naval administrator) during the Anglo-Dutch War of 1664-1667.¹⁰ So although what he writes of the religious landscape is occasionally of interest,¹¹ it is often merely anecdotal and of dubious trustworthiness or value. He hears, for instance, of a meeting of 'Episcopalian and Presbyterian Divines' in October 1660 with the King and Lord Chancellor but can give no details.¹² He hears reports that the City was threatening to abandon the King if he did not favour Presbytery, which even he is slightly dubious of,¹³ although he is clear on 17th August, 1662 about the City's dissatisfaction with the impending ejection of the puritans.¹⁴ There are hints in the diary of the fragility of the Restoration regime throughout 1661-1662, which recollection of daily uncertainty is an indispensable corrective for those who study the period at a distance and might consider what transpired to have been inevitable.

The 'most detailed and most lucid contemporary exposition of the events and policies of the 1660s'¹⁵ comes from Clarendon. His *Continuation of the History of the Grand Rebellion* was written to defend his reputation and legacy after his fall from power (1667-1672). It has the pungent scent of self-justification about it, and although written with a certain historical awareness and purpose he was forced, because of his exile in France, to rely almost solely on his own memory without recourse to official documents (or other actors) back in England. Although 'no study of the 1660s can ignore it'¹⁶ because Clarendon was at the very centre of the struggles between church parties, king, and parliament in 1660-1662, it remains a source which must be handled with great care, like most politicians' biographies.

Baxter's account of this formative period in church relations compares favourably to these other versions of events.¹⁷ He can be praised and criticised

for various similar reasons. Unlike Burnet, he was not only in the country at the time but had access to figures at the heart of the establishment. We hear of him meeting the king himself and being appointed his Chaplain-in-Ordinary;¹⁸ he is friendly to an extent with Clarendon¹⁹ and has meetings with him for various reasons;²⁰ he knew all the actors in the tussle for supremacy within the new religious order;²¹ he was elected a member of Convocation,²² and was the leader of the Puritan–Presbyterian group in the negotiations at the Savoy.²³

Not only was Baxter a major player, he was, like Pepys, also a meticulous and disciplined administrator and writer. He records many details from events he experienced first-hand, and his account includes a wealth of valuable documentation. The end result is 'a sprawling monster' according to Lamont, 'containing everything but Baxter's laundry list'.²⁴ A. G. Matthews comments—

To Matthew Sylvester, his literary executor, he left for publication a mass of autobiographical and other papers, which Sylvester, with a pathetically exaggerated reverence for his eminent colleague's manuscript, laboriously copied out and published without editorial selection or rearrangement. As a result there appeared in 1696, under the title *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, a folio of 800 pages, in which Baxter's personal story, often of intense interest and value, was interrupted by arid wastes of those casuistical subtleties which were the great divine's disastrous foible.²⁵

Sylvester's 'pathetically exaggerated reverence' for Baxter's literary legacy²⁶ may have left us much of merely 'casuistical' interest, but it also ensured that various historically useful documents were preserved for posterity. Time and again in tomes such as Cardwell's *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England* or his equally useful *History of Conferences* or indeed Gould's *Documents Relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (the standard sources for documentary evidence of this period)²⁷ it is from Baxter that the text of important papers has been drawn.²⁸ Some of these papers were never published or officially submitted to the committees for which they were drawn up, but they were certainly discussed and argued over.²⁹ At other times, we know who wrote certain things because of Baxter's identification of them in his account,³⁰ and occasionally we can glimpse the process of amendment and refinement in Presbyterian

presentations.³¹ Besides, *pace* Matthews, casuistical subtlety was often a feature not just of Baxter's writing and thought but of the puritan mindset generally; so even in what to the modern reader may appear his dull moments he is not without value for reconstructing the thought-world of a key group in the 1660s. His careful, methodical commentary and collection of documents is of immense importance.

His record of events is often no less helpful. He punctuates his narrative with the record of various events in English and international history to which he is no more accurate an eye-witness than many others or concerning which he had no first-hand access to the facts. So we hear of the Great Fire, the Anglo-French War, and other incidents of this sort. Undoubtedly he is not to be privileged as a source for everything which occurred in the 1660s.³² Yet concerning the religious settlement, he is an exceptionally useful (though far from perfect) source. In his peerless account of the Savoy Conference he writes, 'You have had the Substance of our wandering Discourses; you are next to have our unprofitable Disputes'.³³ There is no commentary on the conference so full and detailed, and which gives such an insight into the politics and theology of the disagreements there, a snapshot of the puritan-prelate divide. He adds—

Were it not a thing in which an Historian so much concerned in the business is apt to be suspected of partiality, I would here annex a Character of each one that managed this business as they shewed themselves. But because it hath that inconvenience, I will omit it, only telling you what *part* each one of them acted in all this Work.³⁴

He was certainly conscious of the possibility of writing with historical bias, being one of the major players in these events. Although his character studies of the men involved at Savoy would have been immensely interesting it is no less useful to the historian to know the part played by each of the men.³⁵

The Purpose of Baxter's Account

Although Baxter was aware of the dangers of writing history with 'partiality' he was clearly not free of it entirely. There is an agenda to his work. There is some discussion about the development of the autobiographical genre in seventeenth century England; it is said to owe much to the puritan concern for

self-examination, and their desire to have a journal of God's dealings with both themselves and the nation or church for thanksgiving or encouragement in later years.³⁶ As far as Pepys was concerned, his diary was for personal pleasure. It was also a way of 'canalising the stream of experience',³⁷ taking the often random occurrences in his full and eventful life and reducing them to some kind of order. He must also have had an eye on the future, whether it was to be able to justify his own actions to a Parliamentary committee or to entertain his future readers (for whom, presumably, he had the manuscript bound), though it was never designed for the press.³⁸

Baxter's account has similar motivations. Not only in writing up his account some years later,³⁹ but also in his dealings with 'the opposition' at the time, he had a keen eye trained on the future. His prescience about the future course of events and the intentions of the 'anglican' extremists to exclude the puritans were notable. He made sure they were noted and recorded so that posterity could mark how clearly he knew what was at stake. This is well illustrated by the fact that when offered the chance at Savoy to present written papers rather than having a verbal debate, Baxter leapt at the chance. He gave four reasons for this, the fourth being—

But above all, that else our Cause would never be well understood by our *People*, or *Foreigners*, or *Posterity*; but our Conference and Cause would be misreported and published as the Conference at *Hampton Court* was to our Prejudice, and none durst contradict it. And that what we said for our Cause, would this way come fully and truly to the Knowledge of *England* and of other Nations; and that if we refused this Opportunity of leaving upon Record our Testimony against Corruptions, for a just and moderate Reformation, we were never like to have the like in hast again.⁴⁰

There should be, he says, 'a standing Witness to Posterity' of what went on.⁴¹ As Baxter rightly notes, the Hampton Court conference of 1604 was the closest precedent for the meeting at the Savoy. That meeting between James I (plus Archbishop and eight Bishops, eight Deans, and one Archdeacon) and a party of four or five moderate Puritans saw the Puritans denied their exceptions against the Prayer Book, though they claimed the support of around 1000 ministers in the Millenary Petition.⁴²

According to Schaff, ‘The accounts of the Hampton Court Conference are mostly derived from the partial report of Dr. William Barlow, Dean of Chester, who was present’.⁴³ Needless to say, his published account was not at all favourable to the Puritans, whose objections he presents as frivolous and unlearned while giving an obsequiously laudatory view of the King and his Bishops.⁴⁴

The Hampton Court conference led to the enforcement of new rules of subscription for ministers which ‘caused the deprivation of some puritan ministers’.⁴⁵ Baxter foresaw that this might well happen again after the Savoy Conference. So the King was reminded that the ceremonies objected to by the puritans had been ‘a Cause of depriving the Church of the Fruit and Benefit which might have been reaped from the Labours of many Learned and Godly ministers’ who would not be able to sign up to their use. They had been the occasion for ‘great Separations from our Church...[and] may be more likely than ever heretofore to produce the same Inconveniencies’.⁴⁶ He warned that many ministers ‘prefer the Peace of their Consciences in God’s Worship above all their Civil Concernments whatsoever’.⁴⁷

Baxter’s prescience was not appreciated by either side. Calamy and Reynolds were troubled by the plainness of what Baxter wrote during the conference, and urged him to leave out predictions of what would happen if there was no agreement between the Puritans and the Church of England, fearing it might be heard as a threat. He did not want to leave out such things ‘and thereby made them think me too plain and unpleasing, as never used to the Language or Converse of a Court: But it was not my unskillfulness in a more pleasing Language, but my Reason and Conscience (**upon foresight of the Issue**) which was the Cause’.⁴⁸

The Bishops, on the other hand, were also offended by Baxter’s foresight. They would, he said, end up calling him and others ‘Schismaticks’ because they disagreed on some matters which were really of secondary importance—

This speech they were offended at, and said, that I sought to make them odious, by representing them as cruel, and Persecutors, as if they intended to silence and cast out so many. And it was one of the greatest matters of Offence against me, that I foreknew and foretold them what they were

about to do...I told them that either they do intend such a Course or not: If they do, why should they think us criminal for knowing it? If not, what need had we of all these Disputes with them? which were only to persuade them not to cast out the Ministers and the People on these Accounts. And it was but a few Weeks after this that Bishop *Morley* himself did silence me, forbidding me to preach in his Diocese (*sic*), who now took it so heinously that I did foretell it....So dangerous is it to foreknow what cruel Men are about to do.⁴⁹

Clearly he always had an eye on the momentousness of the occasion and the seriousness of the consequences, acting and writing with that future which he foresaw in mind.⁵⁰ As he says himself, 'I thought that the Day and Cause commanded me those two things, which then were objected against me as my Crimes, *viz. speaking too boldly, and too long.*'⁵¹ He was correct about the crucial nature of 'the Day', and I do not doubt his insight into the probable result of the negotiations, nor judge his claims to it to be an invention of a later date. Yet he makes as much of it as he can in his written account, for obvious apologetic reasons. He carefully leaves the impression that he was correct to be so forthright, hindsight justifying him since the puritans were in fact ejected and silenced.

Yet, however, another interpretation might partly blame Baxter himself for this, given that he was not the most skilled negotiator in the Presbyterian camp. Radcliff dismissively writes of his leadership and contribution at Savoy that—

Ecclesiastical politics, like secular, is the art of the possible. Baxter, a visionary, had little conception of the art. Having irritated his opponents, he was surprised and mortified by their indifference (as it seemed) to his 'Work'. It does not appear to have occurred to him that the bishops would see in his project the promise not of peace, but of a continuance of strife.⁵²

J. M. Lloyd Thomas while more sympathetic concurs when he says, 'He towered above most of even the leaders of his contemporaries, but he had a fatal gift for dividing his followers and alienating all but a few through-fire-and-water admirers...by expecting others to have a like candour [as he had] he acted on smaller minds as a maddening irritant.'⁵³ That certainly seems to have been his effect upon the bishops.

Bias in Baxter's Account

No historian is without bias in re-telling his narrative, least alone one who was also an actor in the story. Occasionally we glimpse Baxter's more obvious attempts at self-justification, such as when he clears his name from accusations that he was not a Chaplain to the King.⁵⁴ We see this again when his letter to Clarendon refusing a bishopric is reprinted, and we are given a chance to sample his humility in not only turning it down for himself but suggesting other good men who should be so honoured, and his suggestion that he would be content merely to return to Kidderminster as the curate.⁵⁵ As N. H. Keeble points out, Baxter must have had only one audience in mind when he wrote: posterity. In large part he sought 'to exonerate himself' and 'set the record straight'.⁵⁶ Yet his account is more than merely 'a careful exercise in self-vindication' as Cooper avers.⁵⁷ It is also a plea for what he himself calls 'mere Christianity'—

I am a CHRISTIAN, a MEER CHRISTIAN, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church ... I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call *Meer Christians* by the name of a *Party*, because they take up with *Meer Christianity, Creed, and Scripture*, and will not be of any dividing or contentious Sect, I am of that Party which is so against Parties.⁵⁸

It is this same 'meer Christianity' for which he argues in the *Reliquiae Baxterianae*. So when discussing the contending parties in debates over church government he writes—

each one had some Truths in peculiar, which the other overlookt, or took little notice of, and each had their proper Mistakes which gave advantage to their Adversaries; though all of them had so much truth in common among them as would have made these Kingdoms happy, if it had been unanimously and soberly reduced to practice, by prudent and charitable Men.⁵⁹

Baxter was called to be part of a Committee to draw up a list of the 'fundamentals of religion' as a test for toleration under the Protectorate. 'I knew how ticklish a Business the Enumeration of Fundamentals was,' he writes, 'and of what very ill Consequence it would be if it were ill done.'⁶⁰ His conclusion therefore was that 'I would have had the Brethren to have offered the Parliament the *Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Decalogue* alone as our Essentials

or Fundamentals; which at least *contain all* that is necessary to Salvation, and hath been by all the Ancient Churches taken for the Sum of their Religion’.⁶¹ It is this brand of moderate Christianity for which he stood during the Restoration period, and which he seeks to recommend in his historical account. His ‘constant concern is to distinguish this central body of moderate opinion from the formal excesses of the Episcopalians on the one hand, and the enthusiastic excesses of fanatics on the other’.⁶²

His agenda here is also observable in the way he categorizes conformists and non-conformists after the settlement of 1662. His taxonomy looks roughly like this:⁶³

Conformists	Non-Conformists
<p>Presbyterians in possession before the Restoration —those allowed by their bishop to subscribe ‘in their own sense’ to the settlement, either with vocal reservations or in a paper.</p>	<p>Old School —for the old religious order, anti-Covenant, anti-Wars but couldn’t ‘assent and consent to all things’ now imposed.</p>
<p>Latitudinarians —Cambridge men and Arminians, charitable on salvation of heathen, scholarly types. Didn’t like the settlement but not so bothered as to leave the Church over it.</p>	<p>Reconcilers —those who abhorred party spirit, were for Ignatius’s episcopacy but not English diocesan frame, like what’s good in all forms of govt but see bad in all too.</p>
<p>Hearty conformists a. prelate types by conviction who hated nonconformists. b. prelate types who were moderate towards nonconformists (and twisted the sense of subscription somewhat) c. ignorant ones who were just in it for money and power.</p>	<p>Presbyterians</p>
	<p>Independents some good, but some ‘addicted to separations and divisions’, opened door to Anabaptists and other sects.</p>

It is always instructive to note how people divide up their world, as it tells us something of their perceptions and prejudices. Baxter’s taxonomy of responses to the 1662 Act of Uniformity is particularly interesting because of the way he presents the different parties and thus positions himself amongst them. He clearly has little real sympathy with the conformists. The Presbyterians who conformed he described thus: ‘Some were young raw Men that were never

versed in such kind of Controversies...Some had Wives and Children and Poverty, which were great Temptations to them.’⁶⁴ The implication is that they were able to get away with something others could not countenance, or that they were forced into conforming for financial reasons.

Similarly, the Latitudinarians, he declares, place far too charitable a sense on the words of the Oaths and Laws which bind them, and are guilty of ‘Jesuitical Equivocation’.⁶⁵ This sort of twisting of the sense of the conditions of conformity was also practiced by some of the prelatial Episcopal Party, though many of them were merely ‘raw, or ignorant Readers, or unlearned Men, or sensual scandalous Ones, who would be hot for any thing by which they might rise or be maintained’. Many of the conforming Presbyterians and Latitudinarians he admits are ‘laudable Preachers...their profitable Preaching is used by God’s Providence’.⁶⁶ Yet he clearly has little empathy for their reasoning.

As for the Nonconformists, Baxter is also careful to make distinctions. Some he knew ‘were for the old Conformity’ pre-Civil War, but could not assent and consent to everything in the new conformity. These were few. A greater number, he says, were ‘Reconcilers’, those ‘of no Sect or Party, but abhorring the very Name of Parties’. They are described positively as peaceful, reasonable, moderate men: they are after all ‘of the Judgment which I have described my self to be in the beginning of this Book’. These, and the Presbyterians, he says ‘(if I be not taken for a partial Witness) are the soberest, and most judicious, unanimous, peaceable, faithful, able, constant Ministers in this Land, or that I have heard or read of, in the Christian World!’⁶⁷ Yet clearly he is showing here more than a little partiality!

He just as clearly wishes to distinguish himself from many of the Independents. Some of them are ‘serious godly People, some of them moderate’. Yet among them are also reckoned some who are ‘more raw, and self-conceited, and addicted to Separations and Divisions, their Zeal being greater than their Knowledge’. He has in mind some like John Owen who he elsewhere described as a ‘breaker’, but also those who ‘are proper Fanaticks, looking too much to Revelations within, instead of the Holy Scriptures’.⁶⁸

Thus we see that Baxter positions himself as a most moderate and peaceable fellow in contradistinction to various extremists on both the left and the right.

Typically he can find something praiseworthy in some of those to either side of him (Latitudinarians and conforming Presbyterians; Presbyterians and some Independents) but not to certain others (intolerable Sects and Independents who are too fond of divisions; carnally-motivated Conformists). Thus we see that his attraction to 'meer Christianity' functions as an organising principle throughout his narrative and colours the way he sees and describes events.

Yet Baxter retains a fascinating power to surprise the reader too. Having described what happened on Bartholomew Day and the ejection and silencing of 1800-2000 ministers, he manages not to show immediate sympathy but to censure many of them—

when Pastors and People should have been humbled for their Sins, and lamented their former Negligence and Unfruitfulness, most of them were filled with Disdain and Indignation against the Prelates, and were ready with Confidence to say, 'God will not long suffer so wicked and cruel a Generation of Men: It will, be but a little while till God will pull them down': And thus Men were puft up by other Mens sinfulness, and kept from a kindly humbling of themselves.⁶⁹

Thus we see the truth of his assertion that he was no merely partisan thinker or puritan apologist.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is hard to disagree with Tim Cooper's assessment when he says—

In conclusion, the *Reliquiae Baxterianae* is a complicated source that must be used with extreme care. The point is, though, that it can be used. Armed with a cautious distrust, and aware of potential areas of distortion, we can extract from this difficult book an understanding of Richard Baxter that is both accurate and illuminating.⁷⁰

The *Reliquiae Baxterianae* is equally useful, when handled with equal sensitivity, as a source for the Restoration religious settlement. Despite its flaws, it remains the premier and vital starting point for any serious engagement with this crucial episode in English Church history. A reading of the original or of one of the more modern abridgements is highly recommended.

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1. *The Tragedy of 1662: The Ejection and Persecution of the Puritans* (London: Latimer Trust, 2007).
2. P. Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), p. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
4. As Lord Chancellor, Clarendon was Charles II's most important minister at a time when the role and title of 'Prime Minister' was not yet developed. His account of 1660-1662 is found in *The Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon Lord High Chancellor of England and Chancellor of the University of Oxford: in which is included a Continuation of his History of the Grand Rebellion New Edition* Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1827) pp. 311ff. (vol. 1 p. 311 to vol. 2 p. 202).
5. Burnet's account first appeared in 1723 and is found in Bishop Burnet's *History of His own Time* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour, and Neill, 1753) Book 2, pages 129-285 or in the New Edition of 1850 (London: William S. Orr & Co, 1850), pp. 60-133.
6. The standard short (1096 page) edition is R. Latham, *The Shorter Pepys from The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, a new and complete transcription edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews (London: Bell and Hyman, 1985) pages 1-248.
7. Seaward, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Burnet's time abroad was spent profitably; he learned Hebrew at the feet of a rabbi in Amsterdam.
8. G. Burnet, *History of his Own Time* (London: William S. Orr & Co, 1850) Vol. 1, p. 60.
9. Latham, *op.cit.*, page xxxviii.
10. *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.
11. It is interesting, for instance, to hear him report on 7th July 1660 that this was the first time he had ever heard 'singing-men in Surplices in my life'—the Church of England was re-establishing its old ritual (*ibid.*, p. 61 cf. p. 145). On the 29th July (p. 67) he complains that at one church service with the Bishop of Salisbury (*sic*) the sermon was 'cold' and 'the ceremonies did not please me, they do so overdo them'. (see similar comments on 7th Oct., pp. 84-85). By November 1660 his minister at St. Olave's is beginning 'to nibble at the Common Prayer... But the people have beene so little used to it that they could not tell what to answer' (4th Nov., p. 91).
12. *Ibid.*, 22nd Oct., 1660, p. 88. His patron and source here, The Earl of Sandwich, was "a perfect Sceptique" and not interested in such details. He also reports briefly

on the restoration of the Bishops to the Lords (p. 137).

13. *Ibid.*, 26th July 1661 (p. 147).
14. *Ibid.*, 17th August 1662, pp. 218-19. He also narrates the festivities on the Thames the following Saturday, with 10,000 barges and boats, which must have been a great distraction to the populace (p. 221).
15. Seaward, *op.cit.*, p. 7.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
17. Baxter's account is found in *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London: Matthew Sylvester, 1696), Part II, pp. 215-430. I am grateful to Wendy Bell (Oak Hill College Library) for extended access to the first edition of this work from the Latimer Collection.
18. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* Part II p. 229.
19. E.g. *ibid.*, p. 300: after a letter from the Lord Chancellor seeking favour for Baxter, he writes, 'Can any thing be more serious and cordial and obliging than all this: For a Lord Chancellour that hath the Business of the Kingdom upon his hand...to take up his time so much and often about so low a Person'.
20. They had many meetings together according to Part II p. 265, and he had 'frequent Business with the Lord Chancellour' according to Part II p. 279.
21. His interactions with the Episcopal players is outlined in Baxter, *op.cit.*, Part II p. 363-4. His knowledge of the puritans (both Presbyterian, Congregational and otherwise) is seen in his lists of ejected ministers and descriptions of them in Part III, pp. 90-98. His acquaintance with many other substantial people is seen in the collection of letters mingled into the account, for which see Baxter's index under L for correspondence with John Owen, Amyraut, Dr. Manton, the Government of New England, Dr. Bates, as well as letters to and from Earls and various Ladies of substance.
22. He and Calamy were elected according to Baxter, *op.cit.*, Part II p. 333 but were not able to take their places, being 'excused' by the Bishop of London. The election itself was loaded in various ways in favour of the 'Diocesan Party', says Baxter.
23. Baxter refers to his lead role in speaking at Savoy in Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 364: "As for myself, the reason why I spake so much was because it was the desire of my Brethren, and I was loth to expose them to the hatred of the Bishops..."
24. W. Lamont, "The Religious Origins of the English Civil War," in G. Schochet (ed.), *Religion, Resistance, and Civil War*. Proceedings of the Folger Institute Center for the History of British Political Thought, Vol. 3 (Washington, DC, 1990), p. 6 as quoted in Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
25. A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-1662* (Oxford: Clarendon

- Press, 1988 [1934]), pp. xvi-xvii. These comments are not quite fair. It is the book's immense size which led to Calamy's abridgement and subsequent enlargement of the list of ejected ministers which stands behind Matthews's own work. And yet Baxter is far from comprehensive in all that he records—hence my difficult, for example, in identifying him as the author of the letter from 'A.B.' to a 'person of quality' in *The Tragedy of 1662*, p. 27, fn. 83.
26. J. M. Lloyd Thomas, citing Calamy's report of Sylvester's treatment of the manuscript as almost a sacred thing not to be tampered with (he was 'cramped by a sort of superstition') says that Sylvester 'regarded the MS. of the Autobiography with somewhat of the veneration which is offered to the relic of a saint' in *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* edited by J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1925), p. x. He is also careful to point out that even Sylvester did suppress and modify some portions of the text he received, so that editorial intervention, while not intrusive, was 'far from negligible' in some places.
 27. E. Cardwell, *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England being a collection of injunctions, declarations, orders, articles of inquiry, &c. from the year 1546 to 1716; with notes historical and explanatory* (Oxford: OUP, 1839). E. Cardwell, *A History of Conferences and Other Proceedings Connected with the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer; from the year 1558 to the year 1690* (Oxford: OUP, 1841). G. Gould, *Documents Relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (London: W. Kent & Co, 1862).
 28. E.g., in Gould's collection there are 35 documents and official papers (warrants, petitions, declarations, Acts of Parliament etc). Of these, 2 are taken from Clarendon's Life, 8 are Acts or Proceedings of Parliament, 6 are from various other sources and more than half (19) are taken directly from *Reliquiae Baxterianae*.
 29. See, for example, *A Defence of our Proposals to His Majesty for Agreement in Matters of Religion in Baxter*, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-58 and Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-63 which Gould notes (quoting Baxter pp. 241-42) was never seen in the whole grand debate at the Savoy although it contains very useful evidence of the puritans' objections to much of the ensuing church settlement.
 30. E.g. *The Preface to The Rejoinder of the Ministers to the Answer of the Bishops in Gould*, *op.cit.*, pp. 201-346 was written by Calamy according to Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 357, §229.
 31. See, for example, the passages struck out of their petition to the King as presented at the end of the Savoy Conference which are retained in Baxter's original version, as noted in Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-85.
 32. Evelyn and Pepys are more useful chroniclers of the Fire and the War, for instance.

33. Baxter, *op.cit.*, Part II p. 346.
34. Baxter, *op.cit.*, Part II p. 363.
35. Baxter, *op. cit.*, pp. 363-4.
36. See Keeble's introduction to the Everyman edition of *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* abridged by J. M. Lloyd Thomas, edited with an introduction by N. H. Keeble (London : J. M. Dent & Sons, 1985), pp. xxvi-xxvii. He adds on page xxvii that in William Matthews's bibliography of British Autobiographies there are 2 works before 1500, 14 for the 16th century, and some 200 for the 17th century. Latham, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiii also notes that 'the practice of keeping diaries' from Elizabethan times onwards was stimulated by 'the habit of self-examination encouraged by Protestantism'.
37. A vivid phrase from Latham's introduction to *The Shorter Pepys*, p. xxxiv, and an apt one for a Navy man.
38. According to Latham, *op. cit.*, page xxxiv Pepys often drafted what he was going to write in a different book before he wrote up the final version in his diary. His diary was not just a stream of consciousness, therefore, but a deliberate attempt at literary, historical record which must surely have had a wider purpose than to titillate himself in old age with his former articulacy.
39. Much of *Reliquiae Baxterianae* has the hallmark of having been originally a series of diary entries, or at least to have been based on notes taken at the time of the events described. It was written up in stages some years later and finally published in 1696, five years after Baxter's death. According to Cooper most of it was written in the mid-1660s. T. Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), p. 198.
40. Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 306.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 306. He often claims to have foreseen what would happen; see also page 334 where he says, "And because I foresaw what was like to be the end of our Conference...".
42. See G. Davies, *The Early Stuarts 1603-1660* 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 69-70.
43. P. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996 reprint of 1931 edition), p. 708, fn. 2. Barlow's account was published in 1604 and again in 1638.
44. Cf. also E. Cardwell, *A History of Conferences and Other Proceedings Connected with the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer; from the year 1558 to the year 1690* (Oxford: OUP, 1841) ch. IV parts III-V which contain three short accounts (including Barlow's). See especially p. 184, ll. 24-28 where he describes some of their objections as "very frivolous" and is reminded of the saying that "A puritan

is a protestant frayed out of his wits.”

45. See Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 71 who adds “The sympathy that naturally goes out to those who suffer because of conscientious scruples should not be allowed to obscure the correctness of Bancroft’s decision that ministers of the church must loyally accept its constitution or lose their benefices.”
46. Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 236. Cf. Acknowledgement of some Ministers of London for the Declaration in Gould, *op. cit.*, p. 102: “The liberty of our consciences, and the free exercise of our ministry in the work of our great Lord and Master, for the conversion of souls, ought to be, and are, more dear to us than all the profits and preferments of this world.”
48. Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 265 (emphasis mine).
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 345-6. The conclusion that many would be silenced and cast out had been mooted before with Morley (see p. 340), who discussed it freely and countered with supposed examples of clerical suffering at the hands of the puritans previously.
50. Cf. also page 278 for further instances of writing with posterity in mind.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
52. Ratcliff, E. C., “The Savoy Conference and the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer,” in Nuttall, Geoffrey F. and Chadwick, Owen, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662-1962* (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 127. Cf. also p. 108: “While, therefore, he sincerely desired accommodation with the bishops, he was not the most likely figure to bring it about, or to promote it.”
53. Lloyd Thomas, *op.cit.*, pp. xxvi-xxvii. His comments about his friends were equally candid. Of Reynolds he writes (p. 364), ‘He was a solid, honest Man, but through mildness and excess of timorous reverence to great Men, altogether unfit to contend with them.’ The comment of George Marsden on J. Gresham Machen, another great ecclesiastical politician who spoke with often brutal candour, is pertinent here: ‘You can imagine that, if someone says things like this about one’s friends, that it might be easy to make enemies!’ Cf. G. M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 187.
54. He narrates how the honour was conferred upon him on p. 229 (where the certificate he received at the time is reprinted), and how it was doubted (and he attacked for claiming it) on pp. 279-80.
55. *Ibid*, pp. 282-3.
56. See N. H. Keeble, “Autobiographer as Apologist: *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696)”, *Prose Studies*, 9 (1986), pp. 110-111 as quoted in Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
57. Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

58. Baxter, Church History, "What History is credible...", f. b1 as quoted in Keeble's introduction to *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, p. xx.
59. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, p. 139.
60. Baxter, *op.cit.*, p. 197.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
62. Keeble's introduction, *op.cit.*, p. xxviii.
63. The following table I derive from Baxter's descriptions of 'the true state of the Conformists and Nonconformists in England at this time' on pp. 386-87. He continues to describe them and their several arguments in the subsequent pages. On this see also the helpful J. Pearce, "Bishops and Baxter," *Churchman* 112/3 (1998): 261-2.
64. Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 386.
65. For the phrase, see p. 421 where he also says 'Charity is not blind, nor will it prove a fit Cover for a Lie'. For the similar phrase 'Latitudinarian Equivocation', see p. 427.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 387.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 387.
68. Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 387.
69. Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 385.
70. Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Richard Baxter, Puritan minister who influenced 17th-century English Protestantism. Known as a peacemaker who sought unity among the clashing Protestant denominations, he was the centre of nearly every major controversy in England in his fractious age. Baxter was ordained into the Church of England. His autobiographical *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, or *Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times* (1696), still of interest, gives an account of his inner spiritual struggles. Get a Britannica Premium subscription and gain access to exclusive content. [Subscribe Now](#). Richard Baxter (12 November 1615 – 8 December 1691) was an English Puritan church leader, poet, hymnodist, theologian, and controversialist. Dean Stanley called him "the chief of English Protestant Schoolmen". After some false starts, he made his reputation by his ministry at Kidderminster, and at around the same time began a long and prolific career as theological writer. After the Restoration he refused preferment, while retaining a non-separatist Presbyterian approach, and became one of the most influential leaders of the nonconformists, spending time in prison. [More via Wikipedia] [Read Dr. Joel Beeke's biographical sketch here]. The complete works of richard baxter. *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction*. (576 pages) [pdf epub mobi txt web via Internet Archive]. *Directions for Weak Christians, and the Character of a Sound, Confirmed Christian*. (391 pages) [pdf epub mobi txt web via Internet Archive] Colossians 2:6-7. Richard Baxter was at the heart of seventeenth-century Puritanism despite not having held a significant office. Born near Shrewsbury, in Shropshire, England, Baxter was brought up to fear sin and love the Bible. There was no tradition in the Church of England of giving an account to the minister of one's belief and behavior before being allowed to receive the sacrament, and many resented this Puritan intrusion into their spiritual lives. In 1652 Baxter formed the Worcestershire Association of Ministers to encourage catechizing and discipline, and ministers in several other counties followed suit. A study of Baxter should begin with *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, edited by J.M. Lloyd Thomas (1925; new ed. 1931), followed by F.J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter* (1924).