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Volume 16 (ns) 2008

Editorial

Our Journal for 2008 concentrates our attention on Alexander Carson, Richard Baxter and William Grimshaw, three prominent figures from different eras in church history whose lives and faith still provide many valuable lessons for the contemporary church. As the bicentenary of the formation of Tobermore Baptsit Church falls around 2007/08 it is appropriate that we should be reminded of the life of Alexander Carson. Pastor Joe Flanagan presented Dr Carson as a man of great learning, strong convictions and warm hearted devotion to the Lord and the Lord's people. The debt Irish Baptists owe to Dr Carson's faith and faithfulness is beyond calculation.

We were further honoured this year to have two prominent church historians from America with us, one of whom, Dr Michael Haykin, has been a friend of the Histotrical Society for many years, the other, Dr James Renihan, was making his first visit.

Dr Renihan presented a fascinating critique of the theology of Richard Baxter, pointing out the errors and the dangers in Baxter's theological system. While Baxter's practical works have survived and are still well known and used, his theological works have fallen out of print. This in itself is a telling point which also, when we see his errors, should cause a reevaluation of his practical works. Are his practical works trustworthy if the theological foundation they are built upon is faulty?

Dr Haykin presented an account of the life and work of William Grimshaw who was a contemporary of the Wesleys and George Whitfield and who served the Gospel in a hard area of England in a fascinating historical period. The effects of Grimshaw's ministry remind us of what God can do with those who are devoted to Him and his earnestness and tireless labour challenge us to be busy in the Lord's service while it is still day.

About Our Contributors

Joe Flanagan

Joe was born the second son of Sam and May Flanagan on the 21st August 1951 in the town of Dromore County Down. He was born again September 1983 by the grace of God. He is married to Marilyn and has two children . . . Simon is serving the Lord as a missionary in Papua New Guinea with New Tribes Mission and Emma is a third year student studying psychology. To date he has one grandchild called Nya and looks forward to becoming a grandad a few more times.

James Renihan **BS** (Liberty Baptist College) **MDiv** (Seminary of the East) **PhD** (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)

Dr Renihan has been a professor at the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies (IRBS) in Escondido, California, since 1998. He is currently Professor of Historical Theology and Dean of IRBS. He has lectured at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Northeast Extension), the Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Montréal and several other schools. An ordained minister, he has served congregations in Massachusetts and New York.

Dr Renihan is also an elder at the Escondido Reformed Baptist Church.

Michael Haykin **BA** (University of Toronto) **MRel** (Wycliffe College and University of Toronto) **ThD** (Wycliffe College and University of Toronto)

Born in England of Irish and Kurdish parents, Dr Haykin is currently the Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, located on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. He is also Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and also editor of Eusebeia: The Bulletin of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies.

Dr Haykin and his wife Alison, and their two children, Victoria and Nigel, live in Dundas, Ontario.

Doctor Alexander Carson

Joe Flanagan

Most Baptists have heard of Alexander Carson but know little or nothing about the man and his ministry. Studying his life has been a journey of discovery finding out about the man who was known as the Lion Heart of Ulster. I have divided my address into three divisions, Carson The Man, Carson The Minister and Carson The Messenger.

CARSON THE MAN

Alexander Carson was born in 1776/77, the eldest son of God-fearing parents at Annahone near Stewartstown. By example and encouragement they nourished him in the things of God. Early in life he was taught the precepts and promises of God and could recite the Psalms from memory. This grounding in his formative years had a tremendous effect upon his life for good. Later in life he spoke of himself being in the line of Timothy because he had received such godly parenting. He often spoke of how much he valued his mother's instruction in exhorting him in the Christian faith and used her as an illustration to challenge all mothers to be faithful to their children in the things of God. It would appear that Alexander's parents had set him aside to serve the Lord in Christian ministry. They made the necessary sacrifices in order to send him to a classical school in a nearby village.

His educators would be the second set of people God would use to influence Alexander. In the village of Tullyhogue near Cookstown he was taught by a Mr Peebles who schooled many other young men who would go on to become ministers of the Gospel. It is worth noting that on one occasion his father tried to divert Alexander's attention from the field of learning, probably because the financial resources of his parents were limited and educating one of their children put considerable strain on the family purse strings. Alexander must have wanted to continue his education for he enlisted the support of his grandmother who spoke prophetically to his father William . . . "My son don't interrupt the boy's studies for he may yet be a great man of Israel. I believe God has a great work for him to do."
Following his schooling Alexander enrolled as a student in Glasgow

University studying Greek under Professor Young. He was a scholar of the highest order. He was a diligent student and when he was physically unable to write any more essays he would employ a fellow student to take down what he dictated. He spent himself physically and mentally throughout his university days. Although only 18 years of age Alexander graduated with the first honours in his large class. During his time at university he secured BA and MA and went on to do the necessary course in Divinity. Later in life he would receive honorary degrees of LLD, conferred on him by two American colleges. It is believed that if Carson had remained a Presbyterian he would have become either Professor of Greek in the University of Glasgow or Professor of Moral Philosophy in Royal College, Belfast. His university education, nevertheless, would become a solid foundation for his future ministry.

The third person God used to shape Alexander's character was his wife. In 1798 Alexander married his life partner Margaret Leidly before his twenty-first birthday. She would have been turning 18 years old. She was the daughter of a rich and respected linen bleacher called George Leidly. Margaret was to prove the mainstay throughout her husbands' ministry in Tobermore.

An example of her faithfulness to God and her husband is demonstrated by an encounter she had with her father. After Alexander had resigned from the Presbyterian ministry Mr Leidly was so concerned that he spent hours trying to change his mind. Alexander told him that if his wife did not agree wholeheartedly with him he would change his mind. Mr Leidly, with renewed hope, sat his daughter down and reminded her of all the comforts she would be giving up and the poverty they would face as a family if she did not change her husband's mind. He told her that, if she would not stop her husband's madness, he would not raise one finger to relieve them and assured her he was prepared to see his grandchildren starve. Having finished his speech his daughter replied, "Father, God feeds the ravens when they cry unto him and I cannot believe that while we are striving to do his will, he will let the young Carsons starve." Margaret stood shoulder to shoulder with her husband and, from that day on, she became a stranger to her parents.

Margaret was mother to Alexander's thirteen children (two of whom died shortly after birth), stewardess of his house and overseer of his farm. She managed and paid the servants and even paid his tailors' bills . . . and she did all this on the fluctuating income of £40 per annum, rent-free farm amounting to £10 per annum along with the rector's tithe and bog. To put

this into context the rector James Spencer Knox received £350 per annum and the Presbyterian minister William Brown received £155 per annum. Margaret displayed all the graces of a virtuous wife of Proverbs 31 . . .

> *"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." (Proverbs 31:10-12)*

She was a woman of great intellectual ability. The story is told that Alexander and Margaret would sit around the fire in the evening when the eleven children were in bed and he would dictate to her his theological thoughts and then they would discuss them. She was his secretary and his sounding board and by all accounts she was equal to both tasks. Carson wrote in his prayer journal in January 1805, "I thank thee Lord for the wife thou hast given me, I have not to support her she supports and comforts me, had it been otherwise I know not what I would have done."

Margaret died in 1844, seven months before her husband. Alexander was heart broken and his friends feared for his health. He would often stand on the hill looking towards the place she was buried and was heard to say, "Would that her tomb was in my garden that I might visit every day! For although it is wrong to mourn on account of our friends when they are taken to heaven, still it is not sinful to weep for ourselves." It may be truly said that, 'When such friends part, it is the survivor who dies.' This world had no charms for him after Mrs Carson's death. He desired life only because of his love for Christ and his kingdom.

The fourth and final person God used to influence Alexander was Robert Haldane who, along with his younger brother James, would become the catalyst God would use to bring Alexander to Baptist convictions. They all travelled the same road of biblical discovery.

The Haldanes along with others had become alive to the unscriptural character of worldly churches and began organising churches upon the Bible only. They adopted congregational order and weekly communion throughout Scotland but were not Baptist.

However in the year 1807 James Haldane, the younger brother, after having sprinkled an infant, was asked a question by his six year old son, "Father did the child believe?" "No," said the surprised parent, "why do you ask such a question?" "Because, father, I have read the whole New Testament and I

find that all who were baptised believed. Did the child believe?" It was a simple argument but it was enough. The strange question haunted the mind of James and, after a thorough examination of the Scriptures, he renounced his former beliefs and was publicly immersed. Shortly afterwards, his brother Robert followed his example. After Robert Haldane was introduced to Alexander he was quick to recognise Carson's scholastic gifts. He advised and encouraged him in many of the controversial issues in which he became involved. Carson in many respects was a lonely man and because of his stand had few at the beginning to befriend him. Haldane's help in having many of Carson's works published in Edinburgh was indeed valuable. Such was the friendship that developed between Robert and Alexander that he name one of his sons Robert Haldane Carson.

CARSON THE MINISTER

Having left college, Alexander Carson was licensed by the Tyrone Presbytery to preach the Gospel in May 1797. This was followed shortly by a unanimous call to the ministry in Tobermore Presbyterian Church becoming their minister on 11 December 1798, at the age of twenty-one.

At the time of his induction into the ministry the church at large was in a state of spiritual decline. The Presbyterian Church was paralysed by the influence of secular patronage. The ministers of the Synod of Ulster became voluntary stipendiaries of the government and, as a result, the ministers soon stopped preaching against the evils and corruptions of their day. There were no evangelistic missions, nor were there any Sabbath Schools and the ministers spent more time cultivating their farms instead of preaching the Gospel. Regeneration and holiness of life was lost in the mist of liberalism. In many cases if a man desired to become a minister in the Presbyterian Church it did not depend on his allegiance to Christ but on his alliance with men of influence. The Westminster Confession of Faith had fallen into disrepute. Thomas Witherow wrote concerning the state of the church during the late 1700s 'There was ice in the pulpit, there was snow on the pew.'

Unfortunately the town of Tobermore was not behind her neighbours when it came to sin. Horse races, cockfights and other forms of sin were frequent and well attended by professing Christians. One day the fearless Carson rode his horse into the midst of the race goers and pleaded with his people to repent of their sinful ways.
Many who attended the church were introduced to the milk of false religion at

an early age. They took communion as soon as they were able to repeat the Shorter Catechism. They paid a regular stipend and owned their own pews. They thought as long as they did not commit a gross sin they had every right to the privileges of the church. Carson made up his mind that something had to be done to retrieve the situation. Those who professed faith but did not provide a faithful witness must be challenged concerning their sinful behaviour and if repentance was not forthcoming discipline would be exercised.

There were few allies to be found in the Presbytery or in the Synod concerning discipline in the church. The unwillingness of the Synod to rid the church of wolves in sheep's clothing drove Carson to rethink his position on church government, leading him to become a Congregationalist.

He left on three main grounds: Firstly, the impossibility to create or maintain a 'pure communion' within the framework of the Presbyterian system. Secondly, the prevalence of Arianism amongst his brother ministers and, thirdly, his discovery that congregationalism was the form of church government in the New Testament. This last decided the matter for him once and for all. Independency was the pattern laid down in Scripture.

He would write in his book *Reasons for Leaving the Synod of Ulster* . . .

> "The form of church government which leads us most to Scripture, and requires in church members the greatest acquaintance with them, is the most likely to be that of the New Testament. Now without an intimate acquaintance with the Bible, Independents cannot advance a step in church affairs . . . The Bible is their code of laws; they have no other confession or book of disciplines. They can do nothing without it; it must be continually in their hand, the rulers rule only by the Word of God."

Alexander severed his links with Presbyterianism in 1804, six years after he had been inducted into the ministry in Tobermore. It was not until 26 June 1805, however, that the Presbytery of Tyrone would declare Tobermore vacant.

While recognising the seriousness and consequences of his move Alexander made sure that his attitude toward those who differed from him would be that of Christian brotherly love. He wrote . . .

"The day I gave up my connection with the General Synod I gave

> up all that the world esteems . . . a man is not apt, upon slight grounds to reason himself out of his living, his friends and his reputation. It will not be out of whim he will exchange ease for labour, respect for calumny, (slander) present competency for the naked promise of God. If classical Presbytery be in the New Testament, let its advocate come forward and fairly refute my arguments. But let them not lose their temper, nor substitute railing for argument. Neither let them nibble round the surface of the subject, but let them enter into the essence of the debate . . . Christians of every denomination I love and I will never, I hope, withhold my hand or my countenance from any who, after impartial investigation, conscientiously differ from me."

Thomas Witherow wrote this tribute . . .

> "Carson was a great strong-minded, lion-hearted man. Difficulties could not daunt him. He was not to be turned from what he considered the way of duty because of perils in the path. He took care to do what he thought was right and left it to God to take care of the consequences."

His decision left him without home, without salary and, in many places, without friends. Carson recorded in his prayer dairy on 1 January 1805 . . .

> "As I go out like Abraham not knowing whither I go may the blessing of Abraham come upon me. Scan out my future lot and fix the bounds of my habitation. May I trust myself, my wife and little ones to thy providence. O Lord, I know of all men I am naturally the most unfit for the perilous work to which thou hast called me. Lord hear thy servant on behalf of his dear relations."

For a young man with a wife and family hardship became a reality but a clear conscience before his Lord and Master was a soft pillow to sleep on.

It is believed that after his secession from the General Synod Alexander continued to preach for a number of years in the Tobermore Presbyterian church building to friend and foe until those who opposed him could no longer be restrained. A group from the party that opposed him arrived in the church building one Sunday morning determined to eject him from the pulpit. He asked them to let him finish his address then he would leave voluntarily. This they agreed to. After he had preached as he began to leave the building one of the deacons lifted the Bible and with a loud voice declared, "Let all who wish to follow the Bible come this way!" . . . and a good number of the

congregation followed. Their stand for biblical truth that day was to be honoured by God in ways they could never have dreamt of. Gathering immediately in a nearby field, sixteen men formed an independent church. Some folk point to 1809 as the date of the formation of the church. However there is an unpublished letter written by Dr Carson in 1819 in the name of the Church at Tubbermore and addressed through James Buchanan Esq to some people who had written to him from New York. In it Dr Carson states, "we met as a Church in May 1807". (Publ. Edward Fletcher NY, Benjamin Green London, 1851)

The fledgling church met in open fields and draughty barns before occupying a room near the old cooper's forge in Main Street. It was not until 1814, however, almost ten years after his secession, that pastor and church found a home of their own. The old date-stone in the vestry of the present Carson Memorial Church, which was erected on the site of the original meetinghouse, bears its silent testimony to what must have been for the saints of those days a great and joyful achievement. This building housed a church, which grew to over 500 members and at times Dr Carson preached to a congregation of upwards of 1,000 souls in the open fields.

Approximately three to four years after Carson's secession a number of his congregation came under the teaching of Haldane preachers who came from Scotland preaching Baptist principles. Questions were being asked and answers were being sought as to who was right and who was wrong. Alexander was not well pleased with the influence the Haldane preachers were having on some of the church members concerning believer's Baptism. Alexander was never a man to step back from controversy. George C Moore, one of Carson's students, records the event thus: "The shepherd was immediately aroused! With eager grasp he clutched the shepherd's crook, determined to slay the invader." Carson said, "I thought I could demolish the arguments of those Baptists as easily as you crush a fly." He undertook to do so promising his people answers within a few days which would forever silence the Baptists. Eventually, after a month or so of study, he came to realize that his belief of paedo-baptism was built upon a foundation of sand. The following Sunday morning he stood before his people and declared himself to be a Baptist. It was considered bad enough to be a Congregationalist . . . but to be a Baptist! If the former change was accounted 'foolishness' the latter, many thought, might well be the stuff of 'madness'.

Alexander by all accounts loved his people. It was said that he cared for

them as a Father cares for his children. One Sunday a member of the church was publicly disciplined for some sin. Alexander went home and retired to his garden where he thought no eye could see him. One of the deacons had come to see him and found his Pastor stretched out on top of the ground weeping bitterly. When the deacon asked what was wrong, Alexander replied, "Is it any wonder that I weep when one of God's children is cut off from the church." His pastoral heart was heavy with sorrow for the erring member.

The account of his funeral recorded in the local paper proves that his people loved him. He died on Saturday, 24 August 1844 aged 67. The local paper reported. "Seldom if ever has it been our lot to witness so large or respectable a funeral or on an occurrence on which so much unaffected sorrow was evidenced. It was truly a day of mourning. The coffin was borne from Solitude to the churchyard gate, which is around two miles, by members of his congregation after which ministers of various congregations shouldered it to the grave; it was deposited in the same grave as his life's partner."

One part of Alexander's ministry can be summed up in the following statement, "I anticipated the end, I counted the cost and am daily paying instalments." The other part of his ministry can be summed up in the following verse of Scripture . . .

"... for those who honour me I will honour." (1 Samuel 2:30)

CARSON THE MESSENGER

What makes a theological genius great is that he can take the profound and make it simple. Alexander preached in a way that his congregation understood him. Thomas Witherow wrote concerning Carson's gift of simplicity . . .

> "He was gifted with a rare power of reaching the understanding of the most ignorant. Even a child could carry the substance of his lecture home with it. I have often heard some stupid block into whose thick head it were a task indeed to hammer an idea, tell something that he heard from Carson, though he could not repeat a sentiment that he ever heard from any other man. Massive and original thoughts accompanied with illustrations drawn from familiar objects of life and couched in plain and simple style fell

from the preacher's lips at will and fastened on the hearer's memory forever. Under such instructions no wonder that ordinary men became mighty in the Scriptures under such a minister even a clown could scarcely help growing wise."

It is recorded that as a preacher he was remarkable. His manner was natural and graceful and his preaching was expository going through a book verse by verse. He believed what he preached. He would have preached about:

The Content of God's Testimony (1John 5:11)

"And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son" (v11)

In God's testimony we have three outstanding truths:

(a) that eternal life is a gift of God . . . *"And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life ..."* .

(b) that eternal life is only found through faith in Jesus Christ . . . *"and this life is in his Son".*

(c) that the gift of eternal life is a present possession. "And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son". John underlines these truths when he writes in verse 12 *"He who has the Son has life*".

Whoever believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life . . . apart from Jesus Christ there is no eternal life.

The Certainty of the Believer (1 John 5:12,13)

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life . . . These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." (v12-13)

Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform, was asked on his death bed, "Sir James what are your speculations?". "Speculations," he replied, "I don't have any speculations, *I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day*." The apostle Paul assures of this when he wrote in (1 Corinthians 15:55 -57) "O death where is your sting? O grave where is your victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who

gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death is not the end. It is only the beginning of living in the nearer presence of Jesus Christ.

The Condemnation of the Unbeliever (1 John 5:12)

> *" . . . he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (v12)*

The teaching of the Bible is logical. If you have the Son of God you have life. If you do not have the Son of God you do not have life. The person who will not believe in Jesus Christ as the only way for salvation provokes God to deliver him or her over to eternal death. For the one who does not believe the testimony of God about his Son is calling God a lair.

Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life - and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Alexander Carson believed the gospel he preached and trusted in the Saviour he proclaimed and when the time came he was ready for life's final journey. On 24 August 1844 he received his reward of grace from the hand of his Saviour and Lord. As one of the mainstays of the Baptist Missionary Society Carson was on one of his fund raising trips for them in Wales and England. On Friday 16 August he was waiting at the dockside in Liverpool ready to embark on the night sailing to Belfast. When a clock rang out the hour he checked the time on his own watch. However being unconsciously too near the dock he lost his footing and fell down into the water, which was 25 feet deep. When he was rescued it was found that he had dislocated his shoulder. After his shoulder was reset he took the first available ferry crossing arriving at Belfast in a feverish condition and was taken to the home of Belfast pastor Robert Wilson. His son and son in law, Doctors Carson and Clarke, who lived in Coleraine, were sent for. They endeavored with other medical practitioners to treat his condition. There was for a little time hope of his recovery during the week but early on Saturday, 24 August he passed into the presence of his Lord, death resulting from a congestion of blood in one of his lungs.

During the final days he often requested the Bible to be read to him. "Read me some of the promises," he would ask, "they are my only support, they are the food I want." The lion-hearted defender of the truth of God, the faithful pastor of a unique church and the cherished friend of many, was an

extraordinary man and yet he was an ordinary sinful man saved by the grace of God. He said shortly before his death. "The Lord is God indeed! He is a great God and a good God! He is the God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob and he is my God!" Concerning his final hours GC Moore records that his mood bordered on ecstasy. Carson exclaimed, "To this truth I can certainly set my seal. Through many trials my way has lain, but the Lord has delivered me out of them all!" Alexander Carson's name will live on so long as there are men who will cherish truth and appreciate in their fellows a loyalty to its cause which neither material loss nor opposition can destroy.

Reforming *The Reformed Pastor*

Baptism and Justification as the basis for Richard Baxter's Pastoral Method

James M Renihan BS MDiv PhD

> We say obedience supposeth a man justified; but these men say, that obedience concurs with faith to justify, or is part of our righteousness to justification: we affirm, as a worthy divine observes, that faith alone perfectly justifies, by trusting in the righteousness of Christ; so that *there is no condemnation to them who are in Jesus Christ*, Rom. 8.1 or truly believe in him; but they teach that faith and obedience justifie only, as the conditions of the Gospel, i.e. as thereby we doing what the Gospel requires of us. . . . Mr. Baxter . . . saith, that this condition (viz. the Covenant of Grace, by which we have right to the benefits of it) is our faith [mark it] or Christianity, as it is meant by Christ in the Baptismal Covenant, viz. to give up our selves in Covenant, believing in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, renouncing the contraries; and that though this consent to the Christian Covenant (called faith alone) be the full condition of our first right to the benefit of that Covenant (of which justification is one,) yet obediential performances, and conquest of temptations, and perseverance, are secondary parts of the condition of our right, as continued and consummated; . . . Moreover, 'tis worth noting to observe how Mr. Baxter seems to lay the whole stress of our first justification to what is promised in our baptismal covenant, wherein we profess faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. (Benjamin Keach *The Marrow of True Justification. Or, Justification without Works*, 12-13)

Some may think that I have embarked on a fool's mission in writing this

article. Of all the famous divines of the late Puritan era, Richard Baxter is regularly placed in the first rank. The encomiums for his practical works are legion, his admirers are among the most-respected writers of the last two centuries and several of his works continue to sell at brisk rates among those interested in practical Christianity.

Despite these realities, three factors have led me to stay the course. The first is my own awareness that, in his day, Richard Baxter was considered by many to be among the most controversial of theologians. His theological system was deemed by some of the best and brightest of the era to be heretical and his views came under sustained criticism throughout his lifetime and beyond. While subsequent generations may (at least in popular opinion) consider Baxter at one with the great Puritan writers of the Seventeenth Century, such was not the case in his own lifetime. The second is my own growing amazement at the parallel that exists between Baxter's views and those being proposed in our own generation. I have twice read the first part of the quote above to groups of theologically astute pastors, asking them to identify the date and author. They guessed that it was from our own day! Contemporary deviations on justification, rooted in a faulty baptismal formula have deep roots. The third reality is the response I have received from a large body of men when I have described to them my involvement in this research. Some have expressed their own sense of ill-ease with aspects of Baxter's theology and method; others dismay at his pastoral theology due to a growing awareness of the theological system driving his method. Not one person has expressed to me anything but interest in this work. There is a growing consensus that Baxter's views need closer examination before they become the paradigm for our own pastoral ministry, or perhaps even more germanely, *because* they have become the paradigm for pastoral ministry in some places.

In spending hours with Baxter through his writings I have come to a deep appreciation for his genius and ability. He understood the *systematic* nature of theology in both formulation and practice, and labored to produce what is a remarkably tight and consistent system. He seems to have read almost *all* of the religious writers of his own era, both British and Continental, as well as having a thorough knowledge of the Fathers, medieval theologians, Reformation and post-reformation era writers, both protestant and papist. He was a gifted Latinist and was conversant with the currents of contemporary theological thought. His faith and practice were the result of long and hard thinking.
While we may recognize the brilliance of his mind, we must also remember

the controversial nature of his views. His first explicitly theological work, the *Aphorisms of Justification*,[1] was published in 1649 stirring up a hornet's nest of response and critique. For more than 40 years, Baxter churned out book after book, never altering the substance of any position outlined in that first work.[2] Interestingly, none of Baxter's *theological* writings have been reprinted since his death. Only his *practical* works have received treatment from the various reprinters. As we shall see, this *lacuna* is in one sense unfortunate, and would not have been approved by Mr Baxter. To the contrary, he viewed his practical works as the necessary extension of his theological works, the latter serving as the basis for the former.

Baxter's critics were direct in their evaluations of his ideas. John Owen, in a preface to William Eyre's *Vindiciae Justificationis Gratuitae* said that there was "too great evidence of very welcome entertainment, and acceptance, given by many to an almost pure *Socinian Justification*, and *Exposition of the Covenant of Grace*".[3] J I Packer calls this Owen's "persistent insinuation"[4] concerning Baxter's position. Perhaps more accessible is the appendix to Owen's 1655 work *Vindiciae Evangelicae* which is a reply to some animadversions offered by Baxter against Owen. In that appendix, Owen says "he that shall deny the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and maintain that our performance of new obedience is the matter of our justification before God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, and yet grant the satisfaction of Christ, and assign it a place (some or other) in the business or our justification, his doctrine is but almost Socinian, and yet, in my judgment, is altogether an error".[5] Baxter dedicated his *Aphorisms* to two Westminster Divines, Anthony Burgess and Richard Vines. Neither of them was pleased; Burgess wrote privately and then publicly against Baxter in 1654,[6] and Vines expressed his objections by way of letters.[7] Hans Boersma asserts that "at least five others" sent private comments on the *Aphorisms*, among them a minister from a neighboring village, John Tombes.[8] When the published responses began to issue from the press, Baxter was engulfed by opposition; not only Owen but Tombes, Thomas Blake, George Kendall, William Eyre, John Crandon, and Thomas Tully[9] among others wrote against him during his lifetime. After his death, further treatises came forth against the doctrine sometimes known as "neonomianism" or "Baxterianism" by such men as Robert Traill, Isaac Chauncy, Benjamin Keach, and Thomas Edwards.[10] In addition, it is not unusual to find pointed remarks directed against Baxter's views within other works: one might note Henry D'Anvers' comments in *A Second Reply in Defense of A Treatise of Baptism*[11] or

Joseph Caryl's Preface to Crandon's *Mr. Baxters Aphorisms Exorized and Anthorized* as examples. He lived in a whirlwind of opposition and criticism.

A paper of this length cannot provide a full-blown analysis of Baxter's theology - the reader is urged to consult several existing works for such.[12] For present purposes, we will only be able to sketch out the contours of his theological views. First, we will examine his baptismal doctrine, then notice its extension into justification, and finally draw out some implications for his pastoral theology. To a large degree, I have decided to let Baxter speak for himself.

Baptism

Richard Baxter viewed baptism as the door of entry into the covenant of grace. His 1675 work *Catholick Theologie*[13]is built on this principle. He begins by asking "the wrathful, contentious, zealous dogmatists" to consider a lengthy selection of Scripture verses, and then proceeds to summarize his doctrine in 14 points, the first of which are as follows:

> 1 I assert. The BAPTISMAL COVENANT expounded in the antient CREED is the *summ* and *Symbol* of *Christianity*, by which Believers were to be distinguished from unbelievers, and the outward Profession of it was mens Title to Church-communion, and the Heart-consent was the Title-condition of Pardon and Salvation, And to these ends it was made by Christ himself. *Matt 28.19,20. Mark 16.16.*
>
> 2 All that were baptized did profess to *Believe* in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and devoted themselves to him, with profession of Repentance of former sins, and renouncing the Lusts of the Flesh, the World and the Devil, professing to begin a new and holy life, in hope of everlasting glory.
>
> 3 This form of Baptismal Covenanting and Profession begun with Christianity (and called our Christening, or making us Christians) hath been propagated and delivered down to us to this day, by a full and certain tradition and testimony and less alterations than the holy Scriptures.[14]

The "antient creed" is, of course, the Apostle's Creed. Baxter believed that it

was given by Christ and preserved in the church as the most basic summary of Christianity, being better attested in form, and older than the Scriptures themselves.

This baptismal covenant may be in effect in two ways: it may apply in the case of a convert from another religion - i.e. a form of believer's baptism, or, in the case of infant baptism. In either circumstance, it reflects a conditional covenant in which man's participation is essential. *Richard Baxter's Catholicke Theologie* describes at length the fundamental nature of baptism. He says

> The *New Covenant* is *Christ's Law of Grace*; his *Instrument* by which he *giveth Title* or *Right* to the *Benefits* promised, and conveyeth Right to the Fruits of his Sacrifice and Merits; and his *Law* by which he *governeth* the *Church* as a Saviour, in order to Recovery and Salvation . . .
>
> The Baptismal-Covenant, is a Law imposed, and as imposing the Covenant-Duties, and as determining the conditions of Life and Death, according to which men must live and shall be judged; yea it is the most famous Law, which Conscience hath to do with; Though it be a Covenant as consented to, in the contract. That Sinners have terms of Life and Death, and offered Remedies against all their guilt and greatest Punishments, and Means prescribed, and Duties commanded in order to their recovery, when the Law of Innocency condemneth them; especially the obeying of the Ministry, and Word, and Holy Spirit of Christ, prescribing them his way of cure as their Physician, all this is a Law of Grace; even the Law of Liberty, and the Law of the Spirit of Life, which freeth us from the Law of Sin and Death. Christ's Law consisteth of two parts: ... 1 The Law of Nature (called by many moral) as commanding the love of God and its attendant Duties, not now to an innocent man, but to a condemned-recovering Sinner, as the health to which his Physician doth restore him. 2 And the remedying Law which is more proper to the Redeemer called *the Law of Faith*; which appointeth us the terms and means of our recovery: which is, 1 *Supernatural* as to the Revelation of the *matter* and *reasons* of it, and the foundation of all in Christ's Work of Redemption and his Legislation: 2 But as to the *obligation* or *efficiency* of man's duty, it is both *natural* and

> *supernatural* at once: that is, when it is presupposed that Christ hath done, suffered and offered to our acceptance, all that is asserted of him in the Gospel; 1 Nature obligeth us to believe it (upon evidence of credibility) and to accept it, and thankfully improve it: 2 Christ as the Fathers Administrator, and our King, hath positively commanded us the same.[15]

The act of baptism places obligations on the baptizand, so that he or she must obey the law of the gospel. Baptism is gracious in that it is divinely initiated, but also legal in that it imposes requirements on all baptized. This has tremendous implications for Baxter's doctrine of justification, as we shall see.

When one wonders how these obligations are placed on infants, Mr Baxter provides the answer:

> I take it . . . for the soundest Doctrine that Gods taking the Children of the Faithful into Covenant with him, and becoming their God and taking them for his own, doth signifie no less than a state of Grace, and pardon and right to life eternal; and that they are in this state upon their Parents *Consent and heart-devoting them to God in Christ*, before baptism, but baptism is the solemnizing and investiture, which openly *coram Ecclesia* delivereth them *possession* of their visible Church-state with a sealed pardon and gift of life: For it is not another, but the same promise and Covenant which is made to the faithful and their seed: And all Gods promises to the many Generations of them, in the second Commandment and many other Texts, cannot mean any such little blessings as consist with a state of damnation and the possession of the Devil. . . .
>
> I know the grand difficulty is, that then this *Infant-grace is lost* in many that live to riper age. I have said so much of this in my Christian Directory that I will refer the considering reader there . . .[16]

In another place he says,

> For our believing consent to the Baptismal-Covenant putteth us into *immediate Right* to all the benefits of the Covenant which we are then capable of, but not to all that we *shall be*

> *made further capable of hereafter*; we *are pardoned*, and should be *glorified*, if we presently *died*: But as we have more Grace to receive, so we have more Duty to perform as a means, yea a condition, of obtaining it.
>
> This (over-lookt by many) is much to be considered, both as to the case of *Infants baptized*, and the *Adult*. Many wonder that the Children of godly Parents prove oft so bad, as if by the Baptismal-Covenant they had received nothing from God. . . . The *continuance* of Gods Grace hath a *continued condition and means* to be used on our part. The *condition* which the Covenant requireth to an *Infants first Justification*, is, [*that he be the Child of a true Believer, by him dedicated to God*]. And as the *first Condition* is to be found in the Parents (or Owner) so must the Condition of *continued Grace* as long as the Child continueth an Infant. And that is the *continuance* of the Parents Faith, and his *faithful performance of his promise* made to educate his Child in the way of God. . . . For in Baptism *both Parties were obliged for the future*, and not *one only*. And if when the Child cometh to the use of Reason, *he wilfully* reject and resist Gods Grace, and break his Covenant, he forfeiteth Gods further Grace.
>
> Though Gods Decree is that his Elect shall persevere, yet I conceive . . . that the *Baptismal Covenant as such* doth not *absolutely promise* or *give right* to so much Grace as shall *certainly cause the baptized to persevere*; that is, all that are rightfully baptized (even as *coram Deo* as well as *coram Ecclesia*) have not perseverance secured to them by *baptism*.[17]

The doctrine expressed here is clear. An infant's baptism provides the initial blessings promised in salvation, but does not infallibly secure the end of these blessings, ie eternal salvation. It is necessary for the child to fulfill future obligations as he grows to maturity, stated in this way: "We were engaged in our Infant Baptismal Covenant when we came to Age, as a means to our reception of the benefits of the Covenant, proper to the Adult: therefore we must perform our Covenant, and use this means, if we will have the benefits."[18] What is the means? "A publicke owning of their Baptismal Covenant in the face of the Congregation, and a solemn Promise to live a holy, obedient life: and this at full age"[19] ie confirmation.

Baxter faced the difficulty of reconciling his doctrine with the experience of numerous "Christian" children, recognizing that many departed from the faith, giving no evidence of the pursuit of the law of holiness. His solution to the problem was the assertion that the Scriptures provided three ways in which a mature individual may be brought into full communicant church membership. The first is believer's baptism in the case of the "unbaptized;" the second is "confirmation" for those baptized in infancy and giving evidence of continuation in grace; the third is "absolution" for those that "have proved actual wicked ungodly persons" since their paedobaptism.[20] Baptism was good, but the solemn owning of covenant obligation required more, even when a child "never proved ungodly, nor violated that first covenant".[21] This was to be evidenced in the ceremony of confirmation, which according to Baxter was owned by all of the Paedobaptist churches, and one half of the "Anabaptists".[22] In this ceremony, the soon-to-be communicant believer publicly professed faith and the determination to fulfill his covenant obligations, then received the blessing of the church through a personal prayer of the minister.

At this point, it is important to segue to the doctrine of justification. Infant baptism began the process of salvation by engaging parents and child to covenant obligations; but this was not the sum of the process, it simply pointed the individual to the greater matter of justification.

Justification

The connection between the Baptismal Covenant and Justification is essential in Baxter's system. Further on in *Richard Baxter's Catholicke Theologie* he states,

> The faith by which we are justified, as is aforesaid, is best understood by the Baptismal Covenant, and is essentially a *Believing Fiducial consent* to our Covenant relation to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our Reconciled Creator and Father, our Saviour and our Sanctifyer, connoting the forsaking of all inconsistents. For it must needs be the *same faith* by which *we* are *justified*; because we have our remission and justification by the Instrumental donation of the Covenant, it being one of the benefits given by it: But *Practical Faith*, or *Believing-consent* is our condition of receiving our Covenant right to all the benefits in general;

therefore to Justification in particular.[23]

In baptism, the recipient is engaged to perform conditions, expressed in this citation initially as *faith*, and explicated further as *practical faith* or *believing consent*. Notice that Baxter says that this is "the faith by which we are justified". We need to hear him at length, since his views are so different from those expressed in the Reformed Confessions.

We have stated that his initial book on the subject, *Aphorisms of Justification*, expressed in detail the foundational principles of his system, and they were never altered in his lifetime. The book consists of 80 theses, most of which have lengthy explanations attached. I will present many of these theses (and some of Baxter's "explication" on one of them) at this point and allow them to speak for themselves:

> **Thesis 14.** (1) *The Tenor of the new Covenant is this, That Christ having made sufficient satisfaction to the Law, Whosoever will repent and believe in him to the end, shall be justified through that Satisfaction from all that the Law did charge upon them, and be moreover advanced to far greater Priviledges and Glory then they fell from: But whosoever fulfilleth not these conditions, shall* (2) *have no more benefit from the blood of Christ, then what they here received and abused, but must answer the charge of the Law themselves; and for their neglect of Christ must also suffer a far greater condemnation. Or briefly, Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life; but he that believeth not shall not see life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*
>
> **Thesis 15.** *Though Christ hath sufficiently satisfied the Law, yet is it not his Will, or the Will of the Father, that any man should be justified or saved thereby, who hath not some ground in himself of personal and particular right and claim thereto; nor that any should be justified by the blood only as shed or offered, except it be also received and applyed; so that no man by the meer Satisfaction made, is freed from the Law or curse of the first violated Covenant absolutely, but conditionally only.*
>
> **Thesis 16.** *The obeying of a Law, and performing the conditions of a Covenant, or satisfying for disobedience, or non-performance, is our Righteousness, in reference to that*

Law and Covenant.

Thesis 17. *Therefore as there are two Covenants, with their distinct Conditions: so is there a twofold Righteousness, and both of them absolutely necessary to Salvation.*

Thesis 18. *Our Legal Righteousness, or righteousness of the first Covenant is not personal, or consisteth not in any qualifications of our own persons, or actions performed by us, (For we never fulfilled, nor personally satisfied the Law:) but it is wholly without us in Christ. And in this sence it is that the* Apostle *(and every Christian,) disclaimeth his own Righteousness, or his own Works, as being no true legal Righteousness. Phil.* 3. 7, 8.

Thesis 19. *The Righteousness of the New Covenant, is the only Condition of our interest in, and enjoyment of the Righteousness of the old. Or thus: Those only shall have part in Christs satisfaction, and so in him be legally righteous, who do beleeve, and obey the Gospel, and so are in themselves Evangelically Righteous.*

Thesis 20. *Our Evangelicall Righteousness is not without* [NB Outside or alien to] *us in Christ, as our legal Righteousness is: but consisteth in our own actions of Faith and Gospel Obedience. Or thus: Though Christ performed the conditions of the Law, and satisfied for our non-performance; yet it is our selves that must perform the conditions of the Gospel.*

Thesis 21. *Not that we can perform these Conditions without Grace: (for without Christ we can do nothing:) But that he enableth us to perform them our selves; and doth not himself repent, beleeve, love Christ, obey the Gospel for us, as he did satisfie the Law for us.*

Thesis 22. *In this fore-explained sence it is, that men in Scripture are said to be personally righteous: And in this sence it is, that the Faith and duties of Beleevers are said to please God,* viz *as they are related to the Covenant of Grace, and not as they are measured by the Covenant of Works.*

Thesis 23. *In this sence also, it is so far from being an error*

to affirm, that [Faith it self is our Righteousness,] that it is a truth necessary for every Christian to know; that is, Faith is our Evangelical Righteousness, (in the sence before explained,) as Christ is our Legal Righteousness.

Thesis 24. *This personal Gospel Righteousness is in its kind a perfect Righteousness; and so far we may admit the doctrine of personal Perfection.*

Thesis 26. (1) *Neither can our performance of the conditions of the Gospel in the most proper and strict sence, be said to merit the reward: seeing there is nothing in the value of it, or any benefit that God receiveth by it, which may so entitle it meritorious; neither is there any proportion betwixt it and the reward.* (2) *But in a larger sence, as Promise is an Obligation, and the thing promised is called Debt; so the performers of the Condition are called Worthy, and their performance Merit. Though properly it is all of Grace, and not of Debt.*

Thesis 27. (1) *As it was possible for* Adam *to have fulfilled the Law of Works by that power which he received by nature;* (2) *So is it possible for us to perform the Conditions of the new Covenant by the* (3) *Power which we receive from the Grace of Christ.*

Thesis 34. *The Covenant of Grace is not properly said to be violated, or its conditions broken, except they be finally broken: For the violation consisteth in non-performance of the conditions, and if they are performed at last, they are truly performed, and if performed, then the Covenant is not so violated, as that the offendor should fall under the threatening thereof.*

Thesis 37. *Justification is either* 1 *in Title and the Sence of the Law;* 2 *Or in Sentence of Judgment. The first may be called Constitutive; The second Declarative: The first Virtual, the second Actual.*

Thesis 38. *Justification, in Title of Law, is a gracious Act of God, by the Promise or Grant of the new Covenant, acquitting the Offendor from the Accusation and Condemnation of the old Covenant, upon consideration of*

the Satisfaction made by Christ, and accepted by the sinner.

Thesis 39. *Justification in Sentence of Judgment is [a gracious Act of God by Christ, according to the Gospel, by Sentence at his publique Bar, acquitting the sinner from the Accusation and Condemnation of the Law, pleaded against him by Satan] upon consideration of the Satisfaction made by Christ, accepted by the sinner, and pleaded for him.*

Thesis 40. *When Scripture speaketh of Justification by Faith, it is to be understood primarily and directly of Justification in Law title, and at the bar of Gods publique Judgment; and but secondarily and consequentially of Justification at the bar of Gods secret judgment, or at the bar of Conscience, or of the World.*

Thesis 41. *That saying of our Divines [That Justification is perfected at first, and admits of no degrees] must be understood thus, That each of those Acts which we call Justification, are in their own kind perfect at once; and that our Righteousness is perfect, and admits not of degrees. But yet as the former Acts, called Justification, do not fully, and in all respects, procure our freedom, so they may be said to be imperfect, and but degrees toward our full and perfect Justification at the last Judgment.*

Thesis 42. *There are many such steps toward our final and full Justification; As* 1 *Gods eternal Love and Decree of justifying us.* 2 *Christs undertaking for satisfying and justifying.* 3 *His actual satisfying by paying the price.* 4 *His own Justification, as the publique Person, at his Resurrection.* 5 *That change which is made in our Relation upon our Regeneration, or receiving the vital seed of Grace, where, among others, that is contained, which is called the habit of Faith: this infants are capable of.* 6 *The change of our Relation upon our actual Faith.* 7 *The pacifying our own hearts by the evidence of Faith, and assurance thereupon, and witness of Conscience, and Testimony, and Seal of the Spirit.* 8 *The Angels judging us righteous, and rejoycing therein.* 9 *Our Justification before Men.* 10 *And our final Justification at the great Judgment. But it is only the sixth*

and tenth of these which is directly and properly the Justification by Faith, as is before exprest.

Thesis 43. *The Justification which we have in Christs own Justification is but conditional as to the particular offendors, and none can lay claim to it, till he have performed the conditions; nor shall any be personally justified till then: Even the elect remain personally unjust and unjustified, for all their conditional Justification in Christ, till they do beleeve.*

Thesis 44. *Men that are but thus conditionally pardoned and justified, may be unpardoned and unjustified again for their non-performance of the conditions, and all the debt so forgiven be required at their hands; and all this without any change in God, or in his Laws.*

Thesis 45. *Yea, in case the justified by Faith should cease beleeving, the Scripture would pronounce them unjust again, and yet without any change in God, or Scripture but only in themselves. Because their Justification doth continue conditions as long as they live here; the Scripture doth justifie no man by name, but all beleevers as such; therefore if they should cease to be beleevers, they would cease to be justified.*

Thesis 49. *It being the Laws Accusation and Condemnation only, & not the Gospels, which we are justified against; therefore the Righteousness which must be pleaded for our Justification directly must be a legal Righteousness, which is only Christs Satisfaction.*

Thesis 50. *Our Faith therefore cannot be the least part of that Righteousness so to be pleaded, it being not the Righteousness of that Covenant which doth accuse us; so that though we are justified by Faith, yet is it not any of the Righteousness to be pleaded against the accuser.*

Thesis 51. *Yet if Satan, or any other, should falsly accuse us of not performing the conditions of the new Covenant, and so having no part in Christs Satisfaction, here we must be justified only by our Faith, or personal Gospel-*

Righteousness, and not by any thing that Christ hath done or suffered: For in all false accusations we must defend our innocency, and plead not guilty.

Thesis 59. *Justification is not a momentaneous Act, begun and ended immediately upon our Believing: but a continued Act; which though it be in its kind compleate from the first, yet is it still in doing, till the finall Justification at the Judgement day.*

Thesis 60. *The bare Act of beleeving is not the onely Condition of the New Covenant: but severall other duties also are parts of that Condition.*

Thesis 61. *Therefore though the non-performance of any one of these be threatned with certain death; yet there must be a Concurrence of them all, to make up the Conditions which have the promise of life.*

Thesis 62. *Yet Faith may be called the onely Condition of the new Covenant;* 1 *Because it is the principal Condition, and the other but the less principal: And so as a whole Country hath oft its name from the chief City; so may the Conditions of this Covenant from Faith:* 2 *Because all the rest are reducible to it; either being presupposed, as necessary Antecedents or means; or contained in it as its parts, properties, or modifications; or else implied as its immediate product, or necessary subservient means or consequents.*

Thesis 63. *As it is Gods excellent method in giving the Moral Law, first to require the acknowledgment of his soveraign authority, and to bring men to take him only for their God, (which is therefore called the first and great Commandment,) and then to prescribe the particular subsequent duties; so is it the excellent method of Christ in the Gospel, first to establish with men his Office and Authority, and require an acknowledgment of them, and consent and subjection to them; and then to prescribe to them their particular duties in subordination.*

Thesis 64. *Faith therefore is the summary and chief of the conditions of the Gospel, and not formally and strictly the whole: But as Love is the fulfilling of the Law, so Faith is the*

fulfilling of: the new Law; or as taking the Lord for our only God, is the sum of the Decalogue, implying or inferring all the rest, and so is the great Commandment; so taking Christ for our only Redeemer and Lord, is the sum of the conditions of the new Covenant, including, implying or inferring all other parts of its conditions, and so is the great Command of the Gospel.

Thesis 65. *Scripture doth not take the word [Faith] as strictly as a Philosopher would doe, for any one single Act of the soul; nor yet for various Acts of one onely Faculty: But for a compleat entire Motion of the whole Soule, to Christ its Object.*

Thesis 66. *Neither is Christ, in respect of any one part or work of his Office alone, the Object of Justifying Faith, as such: But Christ in his entire office considered, is this Object:* viz. *as he is Redeemer, Lord and Saviour.*

Thesis 67. *Much lesse are any Promises or benefits of Christ, the proper Object of justifying Faith, as many Divines do mistakingly conceive.*

Thesis 68. *Nor is Christs person considered as such, or for it self, the object of this Faith: But the person of Christ as cloathed with his Office and Authority is this Object.*

Thesis 72. *As the Accepting of Christ for Lord, (which is the hearts subjection) is as Essential a part of Justifying Faith, as the Accepting of him for our Saviour: So consequently, sincere obedience, (which is the effect of the former,) hath as much to doe in justifying us before God, as Affiance, (which is the fruit of the later.)*

Thesis 73. *From what hath been said, it appeareth in what sence Faith only justifieth; and in what sence Works also justifie:* viz 1 *Faith only justifieth as it implieth and includeth all other parts of the condition of the new Covenant: and is so put in opposition to the Works of the Law, or the personal Righteousness of the old Covenant.* 2 *Faith only justifieth as the great principal master duty of the Gospel, or chief part of its Condition, to which all the rest are some way reducible.* 3 *Faith onely doth not justifie in opposition to the Works of*

the Gospel; but those Works do also justifie, as the secondary, less principal parts of the condition of the Covenant.

Thesis 74. *So that they both justifie in the same kinde of causality,* viz. *as* Causae sine quibus-non, *or mediate and improper Causes; or as Dr* Twisse)[24] Causae dispositivae: *but with this difference: Faith as the principal part; Obedience as the less principal. The like may be said of Love, which at least is a secondary part of the Condition: and of others in the same station.*

Explication. I Know this is the doctrine that will have the loudest out-cries raised against it: and will make some cry out, *Heresie, Popery, Socinianism!* and what not? For my own part the Searcher of hearts knoweth, that not singularity, affectation of novelty, nor any good will to Popery, provoketh me to entertain it; But that I have earnestly sought the Lords direction upon my knees, before I durst adventure on it: And that I resisted the light of this Conclusion as long as I was able. But a man cannot force his own understanding, if the evidence of truth force it not; though he may force his pen, or tongue, to silence or dissembling. That which I shall do further, is, to give you some proofs of what I say, and to answer some Objections. Though, if the foregoing grounds do stand, there needs no more proof of these assertions.

If Faith justifie as it is the fulfilling of the Condition of the new Covenant, and Obedience be also part of that Condition, then obedience must justifie in the same way as Faith: But both parts of the Antecedent are before proved.

Thesis 77. *That we are justified by sincere obedience to Christ, as the secondary part of the Condition of our Justification; is evident also from these following Scriptures.* Matth. 12. 37. Mar. 11. 25. 26. Luk. 6. 37. Mat 6. 12. 14. 15, 1 Joh. 1. 9. Act. 8. 22. Act. 3. 19. & 22. 16. 1 Pet. 4. 18. Rom. 6. 16. 1 Pet. 1. 2. 22.

Thesis 78. *Our full Justification, and our everlasting Salvation have the same Conditions on our part. But sincere Obedience is without all doubt, a Condition of our Salvation: therefore also of our Justification.*

Thesis 80. *To conclude: It is most clear in the Scripture, and*

> *beyond all dispute, that our Actual, most proper, compleat Justification, at the great Judgment, will be according to our Works, and to what we have done in flesh, whether Good or Evil: which can be no otherwise then as it was the Condition of that justification. And so Christ, at that great Assize, will not give his bare Will of Purpose, as the Reason of his proceedings: but as he governed by a Law; so he will judg by a Law: and will then give the Reason of his Publique Sentence from mens keeping or breaking the Conditions of his Covenant; that so the mouths of all may be stopped, and the equity of his judgment may be manifest to all, and that he may there shew forth his hatred to the sins, and not onely to the persons of the condemned; and his Love to the Obedience, and not onely to the persons Justified.*

These theses are startling indeed, but they need little comment. Baxter himself anticipated the type of response he would receive, and he was correct. In his system, the engagements of baptism should result in a life of faithful obedience to God in Christ, so that justification and sanctification are conflated into one, faith is defined in terms of righteous acts, and the believer is taught that he himself has an important, albeit subsidiary, part to play in his own justification. Holiness is not simply the grateful response of a forgiven sinner, it is the necessary act of the baptized Christian - his works make a significant contribution to justification. It is almost superfluous to state that this is not the doctrine of the Reformers or the Reformed Confessions.

Twenty-six years later, Baxter said the same thing: *"All the Righteousness* which *formally* justifieth us, is *our own* or *on our selves* where it justifyeth us."[25] But he did not stop here. He increased the stakes by stating "Though all our past sins are pardoned at our first Faith or Conversion (or as the Ancients speak in Baptism) yet it is most certain that *Pardon* or *Justification* is not perfect at first, no nor this side death: And the saying of many that *Justification is perfect at first*, and *Sanctification only by degrees*, is a palpable error".[26] Baxter implies that justification must be perfected in degrees. The initial act of justification commences the process, but it is only complete at the last day when the believer's faithful obedience is revealed.

Knowing that the Independents in the publication of their *Declaration of Faith* had strengthened the language of justification[27] used in chapter 11 of the *Westminster Confession*, Baxter criticized their position. After citing their confessional statement at length, and using language in the third person he says "upon the publication of this it was variously spoken of: some thought

that it gave the *Papists* so great a scandal, and advantage to reproach the *Protestants* as denying all inherent Righteousness, that it was necessary that we should declaim it".[28] In the final part of his *Catholicke Theologie*, some "Protestants" come under harsh criticism for the doctrinal offenses they give to "Papists," and the words used are telling. After describing the differences between Protestants and Papists which he perceived to be of consequence (Papal power, Government, Worship, Purgatory, Indulgences, Auricular Confession, Transubstantiation etc.) he spoke of other topics "made by many the matter of greater difference than there is cause" such as

> predestination, providence, the cause of sin, mans power, free-will, grace, certainty of salvation, and I might have added, Justification and merit as held by their church and most of the Schoolmen: not that here is no difference indeed; but that long study hath made me certain that it is more in words than is commonly conceived: and this truth is fit to be spoken though the mistaken be offended by it.[29]

This is a remarkable condemnation of the judgment of nearly all Reformation and Post-reformation theologians! Baxter sweeps away the differences on some of the most foundational doctrines of the era, stating that most of the differences are merely verbal. Probably, this is wishful thinking - a tacit recognition that *his* views differed little from Rome, desiring, by this method, to make them seem more orthodox than they were. It is no wonder that his doctrines caused a firestorm of opposition.

What are the doctrinal sins of Protestants? A summary list of 21 topics is provided, among which numbers 12-14 state "12 Those that assert *Imputation* of Christ's Righteousness in that sense which I have proved to subvert the Gospel. 13 And those that deny *Faith it self* to be imputed for righteousness. 14 And those that deny that there is any *personal* Evangelical Righteousness in our selves that is any way necessary to our Justification".[30] These sins were so serious that

> Such men have *corrupted* the *Gospel* of Christ, by bringing in many doctrinal errors, and opening a door to the heretical to bring in more. Almost all the Libertine *Antinomian* errors, have come in by an injudicious opposition to Popery, as if they were the Vindication of *Election, Free Grace, Christs Righteousness, Justification by Faith, Perseverance*, against *Works* and *Merits*: And it is not to be denyed, that the said

> *Libertine* Doctrines do more contradict the Doctrine of the Gospel, even Christianity it self, than the Doctrine of the *Papists* about the same subjects do. I know this to be true, who ever is offended at it.[31]

This is followed by a list of Romanist authors who are said to be "not near so erroneous about Justification, Grace, Faith and good works" as a series of English authors,[32] and then by this remarkable statement

> Your injudicious opposition greatly *hardeneth* the Papists, and hindereth their *conviction*: When they find some errours in your writings, (as that all are bound to believe that they are elected and Justified, that this is the sense of the Article, I believe the forgiveness of sin, that this is *fides divina*, that we are Reputed of God to have fulfilled all the Law of Innocency habitually and actually in and by Christ, etc.) and then when they read that such men lay the great *stress* of the Reformation upon these, as the very cause of our rejecting *Rome*, and the *articuli stantis aut cadentis Ecclesia,* what can more harden them to a confidence that we are hereticks and that they are in the right?[33]

While it seems almost unnecessary to say any more, Benjamin Keach provides a helpful summary:

> I suppose Mr. *Williams*, and Mr. *Baxter* were of the same Faith and Judgment. If you will know what Terms and Condition of the Covenant of Grace are, which must be performed by us that we may be justified, both these Men tell you, (though the latter more fully) 'tis to make good this Baptismal Covenant, *viz.* sincerely to love, believe, obey, worship, and serve the Lord; so that Faith alone as it receives Christ, or helps us to fly to Christ, and relie on Christ, is not the alone way or condition (if it may be so termed) on our part in order to actual Interest in Jesus Christ, and Justification; but also the whole of Gospel-Obedience and Holiness, they make to be as absolute Conditions in order thereunto, as Faith. Sirs, we deny not but that Obedience and Personal Holiness is necessary to Salvation, or in order to a meetness for an actual Possession of Heaven: But we must exclude all inherent Holiness or Works

of Obedience done by us, in point of Justification.[34]

We are now prepared for some brief remarks about pastoral theology.

Pastoral Theology

It must be recognized that Baxter the theologian was first and foremost Baxter the pastor, and that his theological conclusions were the foundation upon which his pastoral theology was built. When, for example, he published his *A Christian Directory*, almost the first words in the book are these: "As Amesius's 'Cases of Conscience" are to his 'Medulla,' the second and practical part of theology, so is this to a 'Methodius Theologiae' which I have not yet published." A few paragraphs later, he indicates that the "great work of this treatise" is for "the reducing of theoretical knowledge into serious Christian practice".[35] What could be clearer? In the same way that William Ames completed his *Marrow of Divinity* with a practical work on *Cases of Conscience*, so Baxter considered his *Directory* as the outworking of his *Theological Method*. He envisioned no bifurcation between faith and life; rather he worked out an intimate relationship between the two. Doctrine serves as the basis - it sets the parameters and articulates the theoretical relationships; life takes those foundational principles and acts upon them. The relationship never ends: faith is fulfilled in practice; duty expresses doctrine. Baxter the pastor understood that the content of faith is never merely theoretical; Christianity is not a purely notional religion. To the contrary, every doctrine leads to obedience; how a Christian lives will be based upon, governed by and consistent with the truth he believes.

For Baxter, pastoral theology is the practice of doctrinal theology, and his practical books were intended to put flesh and bones on the skeleton of doctrine. It is a mistake to think that the one may be separated from the other. This is why the present study is important. If Baxter's doctrinal works are heterodox or worse, do his practical works escape without taint?

It has been asserted that Baxter's doctrinal views must not and cannot be divorced from his practical views; the lengthy citations above demonstrate this point. Baxter was serious about encouraging holiness in his people, so much so that he forced the Protestant doctrine of justification into a heretical mold, believing that if it were to remain as received, it would only promote antinomianism and licentiousness. Unable to maintain the well established distinction between justification and sanctification, Baxter developed a

system in which the gospel became a new and milder law, a law that must nevertheless be obeyed. For him, the freedom of grace was compromised by a doctrine intent on gaining heaven by works, and this perspective permeates Baxter's pastoral method.

When a minister concludes that the only way that his people will be saved is if they participate in their justification, he will preach to them this necessity. Since almost all of them would have been engaged by their parents into covenant relations with God *via* infant baptism, it was only proper for him to seek to call them to covenant faithfulness, i.e. to complete the engagements brought upon them by their parents. He did not simply preach to them the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, but developed a pastoral theology consonant with his doctrinal theology, in which his people were urged to work their way to heaven - or at least to participate in the gaining of heaven. From Baxter's perspective, this was the only appropriate course for him to take, as his own justification would be bound up in the successful performance of his own covenantal obligations. Sadly, the gospel was severely compromised by this method.

There can be no mistake about this; Baxter's doctrinal writings are replete with these kinds of statements. In *An Appeal to the Light*, he said

> As Christ is our King, and hath freely given his benefits, by the way and terms of a Law of Grace (the Baptismal Covenant) so that Covenant or Law must be performed by us through his grace: and we must be judged by that Law: And we must have a Righteousness required by that Law in subordination to Christ's Meritorious Righteousness: And by that personal Righteousness, we must be justified against the contrary charge: that is, we must be justified by our faith against the charge of Impenitency; and by our Love, Holiness, Obedience and Sincerity, against the charge of final unholiness, rebellion, and being hypocrites: And the day of Judgment will not be to try Christ and his Righteousness, but (to honour it) and try us and ours: And all men shall be judged according to their own works: And to be judged, is to be justified or condemned: And salvation or damnation will be adjudged us as we are found to have been personally righteous or unrighteous, in respect to the terms of the Law of Grace.[36]

In his *A Christian Directory* he wrote, "I have been necessitated to leave out much (about conversion, mortification, self-denial, self-acquaintance, faith, justification, judgment, glory, etc.) because I had written of them all before".[37] His Seventeenth Century readers would have had ready access to his views on these matters, and would have understood the intimate relationship envisioned by their author. But at the distance of three centuries, with the unavailability of his doctrinal works, and the loud chorus offering praise for his practical writings, this symbiosis of theology and practice is virtually unknown. This study is an attempt to begin to rectify the situation.

Conclusion

What should be our conclusion? It is simply this: Baxter's theology is at best heterodox and at worst heretical; his pastoral theology must therefore be treated with the greatest of caution. This is not to make a blanket condemnation of his practical works. It is simply to say that the modern reader must come to them with the awareness that they are ineluctably tainted by the doctrinal foundation upon which they are built. To apply them to pastoral methodology today without due caution is irresponsible. While this may run counter to the expressed opinions of many authors, it is nonetheless an inevitable deduction. Baxter himself recognized the integrative nature of theology - it was his system that drove his method. If we neglect this reality, we run the risk of falling into a serious error. We cannot proclaim the free grace of God to our people on the Lord's Day, and then undermine it by a subtle insistence on works in pastoral dealings. The dividing wall between sanctification and justification must be maintained, or we fall prey to the gravest danger imaginable - the loss of the Gospel itself. This is not a simplistic "thin end of the wedge" type of argument - it is sober reality.

Baxter's system was seriously mistaken. There were, undoubtedly, some fanatics who abused the doctrine of justification by free grace, proclaiming an essentially antinomian dogma. But this was not the case with the received Protestant teaching, and could not have been the case with any of the orthodox formulations. We began with Benjamin Keach; it seems appropriate to let him have the final word:

> 'tis a hard Case that any of those who maintain the Old Doctrine of Justification, should be branded with the black Name of *Antinomians*. As for my part, if Dr. Crisp be not misrepresented by his Opposers, I am not of his Opinion in

several respects; but I had rather erre on their side, who strive to exalt wholly the Free Grace of God, than on theirs, who seek to darken it and magnifie the Power of the Creature, . . . the Doctrine we preach does not open a Door to the least Licentiousness (as 'tis unjustly said to do by some, who are either wilfully or ignorantly blind). No, God forbid. Nothing can promote Holiness, and Gospel-sanctification like unto it, only it teaches us to act from high, sublime, and right Evangelical Principles: It shews the only way to attain to Gospel-Purity, flows from our Union with Christ; and that no Man can arrive to any degree of true holiness, or expect to meet with any Success therein, without a Principle of Spiritual Life, or saving Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The nature of Men must first be changed, and that Enmity that is in their Hearts against God, be removed, before they can be holy: The Tree must first be made good, or the Fruits will be evil. The Image of God must be formed in our Souls, which puts the Creature into an actual bent and propensity of his Heart to the Practice of Holiness. If a Man hates not sin, be not out of Love with Sin, how should he be in love with God and Holiness? Now because we say Sanctification is not necessary, as antecedent to Justification, but is the Fruit or Product of Union with Christ; though we deny not but the Habits of Holiness are infused at that same Instant that Faith is wrought in the Soul, Must we be look'd upon as *Promoters of a Licentious Doctrine*? Must we make our own Performances, or Obedience, a Condition of Justification, or be laid under Infamy and Reproach? 'Tis by Faith only, that we come to have actual Enjoyment and Possession of Christ himself, and of Remission of Sin; and not only so, but of eternal Life; and so of Holiness also, and no other ways. The good Lord help you to a right Understanding of these things, and make you all a holy people, to the Praise of his Glory, and Honour of your Sacred Profession.[38]

Amen

References

1 Richard Baxter, *Aphorisms of Justification, with their Explication annexed* (London: Francis Tyton, 1649).

2 JI Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 417.

3 William Eyre, *Vindiciae Justificationis Gratuitae*,(London: R.I., 1654), unnumbered preface page, emphasis in original. I have retained archaic orthography, punctuation and emphases (i.e. the use of italics, upper case letters etc.) in citations from primary source documents. Baxter (or his printers) seems to have been especially bad with the possessive apostrophe.

4 Packer, *Redemption*, 398.

5 John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966 reprint), 12:597. The appendix runs from page 591-616.

6 Anthony Burgess, *The True Doctrine of Justification Asserted and Vindicated from the Errours of many, and more especially Papists and Socinians* (London: Thomas Underhill, 1654).

7 Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in its Seventeenth Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993), 33-36.

8 Ibid., 36-37.

9 Thomas Blake, *The Covenant Sealed* (London: Abel Roper,1655); George Kendall, Qeokratia *Or, A Vindication of the Doctrine Commonly Received in the Reformed Churches Concerning Gods Intentions of Special Grace and Favor to his Elect in the Death of Christ* (London: Thomas Ratcliffe, 1653); *Sancti Sanciti. Or, The Common Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints* (London: Thomas Ratcliffe, 1654); John Crandon, *Mr Baxters Aphorisms Exorized and Anthorized* (London: 1654); Thomas Tully, *Justificatio Paulina sine operibus ex mente ecclesiae anglicanae* (Oxford: Henry Hall, 1674); *A Letter to Mr. Richard Baxter Occasioned by several injurious Reflexions of his upon a treatise entituled Justificatio Paulina* (Oxford: Henry Hall, 1675).

10 Robert Traill, *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine concerning Justification, and of its Preachers and Professors, from the unjust charge of Antinomianism* in *The Works of the Late Reverend Robert Traill, A.M.* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1975 reprint), 1:252-296; Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmasked: or, The Ancient Gospel Pleaded against the other called a New Law or a New Gospel* (London: J Harris, 1692); *Alexipharmicon: or a Fresh Antidote against Neonomian Bane and Poyson to the Protestant Religion* (London: W Marshall, 1700); Benjamin Keach, *The Marrow of True Justification, or Justification without Works* (London: D.N. 1692); *A Medium Betwixt Two Extremes* (London: Andrew Bell, 1698); Thomas Edwards, *The Paraselene Dismantled of her Cloud, or, Baxterianism Barefaced* (London: William Marshall, 1699). Edwards is not to be confused with the earlier Presbyterian Thomas Edwards nicknamed *Gangraena* after his famous books of the same title. WT Whitley suggests that the latter Edwards was a Baptist. See WT Whitley, *A Baptist Bibliography*, (New York: Georg Olms, 1984 reprint), 216.

11 Henry D'Anvers, *A Second Reply in Defense of A Treatise of Baptism* (London: Francis Smith, 1675), 223. D'Anvers cites a variety of authors, including Tully and Owen, in order to demonstrate the similarity of Baxter's doctrine of justification with 'papist' views.

12 See Packer, *Redemption*, Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn*, and C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (London: SPCK, 1966). In my estimation, Packer whitewashes Baxter's theology; see my review of his book in Reformed Baptist Theological Review II:1, January 2005, 160 ff. Even this paper is somewhat artificial in isolating baptism and justification from Baxter's larger system. A full treatment would address his views of predestination, the atonement and its extent, imputation, and man's fall. It might also explore Baxter's views of the necessity of salvation by the gospel—he argued, for example, for "the necessity of Faith in Christ, where the Gospel is known" in *An End of Doctrinal Controversies Which have Lately Troubled the Churches by Reconciling Explication, without much Disputing* (London: John Salusbury, 1691), 212. In *Catholicke Theologie* [Richard Baxter, *Richard Baxter's Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure,*

Peaceable: For Pacification of the Dogmatick Word-Warriours (London: Robert White, 1675)] he says "those therefore that teach the Church, that it is a *certain truth*, that *no one in the world (Infant* or *Aged)* is *saved from Hell fire*, but *Christians* only, and that this is not only *certain* to such great understandings as their own, but *must be so to all Christians*, do but discover that they over-value their own understandings, and that siding hath contracted their thoughts and charity into a sinful narrowness, and that the Opinions of men, counted Orthodox, prevaileth more with them than the evidence of truth, and I think that they are to be numbred with those that by over-doing, do dangerously undermine the Christian Faith." II.49. Sect.5.88. The pagination of *Catholicke Theologie* is difficult and confusing.

13 The title is very important and purposeful. Arguing that Christian Theology should not exceed the statements of the Apostle's Creed, Baxter sought for a system of theology that could unite the divided branches of Christendom. Ironically, the work is a folio of some 700 pages.

14 Ibid., unnumbered pages 5-6.

15 Ibid., I.42.Sect. IV.60.

16 Richard Baxter, *More Proofs of Infants Church-membership and Consequently their Right to Baptism* (London: N. Simmons, 1675), 206-07.

17 Baxter, *Catholicke Theologie*, II.72-73. Sect.IX.172-74. The brackets are in the original text.

18 Richard Baxter, *Confirmation and Restauration, the Necessary Means of Reformation and Reconciliation* (London: A.M., 1658), 17.

19 Ibid., 220.

20 Ibid., 91-93.

21 Ibid., 91.

22 Ibid., unnumbered page 5 of "To the Reader." The half of the "Anabaptists" who did not practice confirmation (or its equivalent) was the Particular Baptists. Baxter overstates the case with regard to Paedobaptists.

23 Baxter, *Catholicke Theologie*, II.55. Sect.VI.106.

24 The initial parenthesis is missing in the original.

25 Baxter, *Catholicke Theologie*, II. 74. Sect. XI.181.

26 Ibid., II.85. Sect XIII.210. See his attempt to re-interpret this view at Thesis 41 above. The same theme occurs elsewhere in Baxter. In *How Far Holinesse is the Design of Christianity* (London: Nevill Simmons, 1671), 15, he says "It is certain that Justification and Sanctification go on hand in hand together . . . and that it is a notorious errour of such as say that Justification is perfect as soon as it begins."

27 The language was adopted *verbatim* by the Particular Baptists in the *Second London Confession of Faith*. See *A Declaration of the Faith and Order Owned and Practiced in the Congregational Churches in England* (London: D.L., 1659), 9; *A Confession of Faith put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their faith) in* London *and the Country(N.P.: Printed in the Year, 1677) 40.*

28 Richard Baxter, *Of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Believers* (London: Nevill Simons, 1675), 26-27. A similar criticism may be found in *Catholicke Theologie*, IV.254 (no section numbers).

29 Baxter, *Catholicke Theologie*, IV.283. The same theme is addressed in *An Appeal to the Light, or Richard Baxter's Account of Four accused Passages of a Sermon on Eph. 1.3.* (London: Nevil Simmons, 1674), 4-5.

30 Ibid., IV.288. We have not mentioned Baxter's faulty doctrine of imputation.

31 Ibid., IV.289.

32 The Romanists are Aquinas, Scotus, Gabriel, Bellarmine (!), Pererius, Tolet, Vasquez, Suarez and Molina; the English authors are Richardson, Randal, Sympson, Towne, Crispe and Saltmarsh. Among them Samuel Richardson was an early Particular Baptist who adopted strange views and distanced himself from his Baptist friends; Tobias Crisp was a reputed antinomian (Keach says that he "was abused" at the hands of his enemies and his friends - see Keach *Medium*, 31); John Saltmarsh was a curious mid-century seeker/antinomian. None of them were in the mainstream of English Reformed thought - hardly convincing targets for criticism.

33 Ibid., IV.290. The "Article" is from the Apostle's Creed; the Latin phrase may be translated "the article of a standing or falling church." It was the great appellation given to the doctrine of justification by faith alone by Luther. Baxter here seeks to turn the Reformation on its head - as if the gospel itself were not at stake in that era. Was the Reformation really about minor matters?

34 Keach, *Marrow*, 14. Mr Williams is Daniel Williams, the most prominent leader of the *Baxterian* movement after Richard Baxter's death.

35 Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990 reprint), 3. The *Christian Directory* was published in 1673; *Methodius Theologiae* was published in 1681. Written in Latin, he considered it his most complete statement of systematic theological expression. A perusal of the "Advertisement" prefixed to *A Christian Directory* will hint at the controversies swirling around Baxter.

36 Baxter, *An Appeal to the Light*, 3.

37 Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 4.

38 Keach, *Marrow*, sig. A2.

William Grimshaw of Haworth & the Baptists of Yorkshire [1]

Michael A G Haykin BA MRel ThD

"Dissent warmed its hands at Grimshaw's fire"

The Yorkshireman William Crabtree (1720-1811) never forgot the first time that he heard the preaching of William Grimshaw (1708-1763). It was 1743, when Crabtree was twenty-three, and the Anglican Evangelical was speaking on the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In the course of the sermon, Grimshaw made the observation that "one sin would damn a soul as well as a thousand"[2]. Now, Crabtree had done his apprenticeship as a weaver in what he later described as "a wicked village, next door to hell itself, given to Sabbath breaking, drunkenness, profane cursing and swearing". Nor had haebeen immune from the sins of his fellow villagers. Upon hearing this one sentence, driven home to his heart by the Spirit of God, he said that he thought his situation was "deplorable". But such was the drawing power of the Spirit of God that he continued to go to Haworth to listen to Grimshaw. In time he was soundly converted and eventually became the first pastor of Westgate Baptist Chapel in Bradford, as well as planting three other West Yorkshire Baptist causes at Halifax, Farsley and Leeds.[3]

Crabtree was one of thousands who blessed God for the day that they first heard Grimshaw, whose powerful preaching was the means of their conversion. The following lecture, in the four-hundredth anniversary of Grimshaw's birth, explores some aspects of Grimshaw's life and ministry, as well as indicating how God used this Anglican cleric to help revive the Baptist interest in Yorkshire.

Early days in Lancashire and Cambridge

William Grimshaw was born on September 3, 1708, at Brindle, Lancashire, not far from Preston. There is very little reliable data about his early years, though there is some evidence that his parents, nominal Christians at the time, raised him with a sense of moral responsibility to a holy God.[4] At the age of seventeen Grimshaw went up to Cambridge where he was admitted to Christ's College—the college of John Milton (1608-1674)—as a sizar (poor student) in April, 1726. The population of Cambridge at the time was some six thousand, a fraction of today's population. It is important to realize that academic standards at Cambridge during the eighteenth century were not that high. The majority of the professors did not lecture or tutor the students, but spent their time writing and left the direction of the students' academic studies to tutors or tutorial assistants. Academic requirements for completing a degree course were minimal. Moreover, as John Wesley (1703-1791) noted about the moral state of Cambridge University and its counterpart in Oxford: "the moment a young man sets foot in either Oxford or Cambridge he is surrounded by company of all kinds ... with loungers and triflers of every sort; with men who no more concern themselves with learning than religion". [5]

During his first couple of years at Cambridge, Grimshaw, however, applied himself to his studies and later described himself at this time as "sober and diligent".[6] But this soon changed as Grimshaw gave way to the moral turpitude of university life. In his own words, he fell in "with bad company" and "learned to drink, swear, and what not".[7] Given his style of living, it is amazing that throughout the latter period of time he hoped to become a clergyman upon graduation. As he put it, he aimed at such because it would give him a steady source of income, a roof over his head and bread upon his plate.[8] What theology he had was of the Deistic variety, in which the robust Christianity of the Reformers and Puritans was subjected to the scrutiny of human reason and all that seemingly could not pass the test of rationality was rejected or played down. Thus the very concept of revelation was discarded along with Trinitarianism and the deity of Christ.[9]

Despite his evident lack of qualifications to be a minister in the Church of England, Grimshaw was ordained in April of 1731 and proceeded to his first charge, what was then the hamlet of Littleborough, three miles north of Rochdale, Lancashire. He was in this parish but a few months. The September of the same year he moved six miles further north to Todmorden, where he was ordained a priest in the Anglican Church in 1732. The men and women in his parish were described by one contemporary as "wild, uncouth, rugged as their native hills".[10] But it was here at Todmorden that Grimshaw began to be

awakened to the fact that he was in a desperate spiritual state.

Awakened to "the pardoning love of God"

The godlessness of Grimshaw's life was all too typical of eighteenth-century clerics. Like many other ministers throughout the length and breadth of England, Grimshaw spent his time fishing and hunting, drinking and playing cards. Instead of being times of spiritual nurture, his pastoral visits were occasions for heavy drinking.[11] And like other ministers of this ilk, he thought nothing of the vows he had made when ordained to preach the gospel and to be the spiritual guide of those in the parish. John Newton (1725-1807), who wrote an early biography of Grimshaw, noted that he did "his duty, as the phrase is, in the church, once on the Lord's day. ... With this his conscience was satisfied. Whether his flock was satisfied, he neither knew nor cared".[12]

How then was he awakened and converted? In part, the cause of his awakening was the death of a five-week-old girl, the first child of a young couple in the parish, James and Susan Scholfield. The mother awoke one awful morning to find the child she dearly loved stone dead. For a period of time Susan's mind became unhinged and she continued to tend to the child as if it were alive. Grimshaw was called for, but could only advise the parents "to put away all gloomy thoughts, and to get into merry company, and divert themselves, and all would soon be right".[13] Not surprisingly, this advice proved utterly ineffective to help the parents overcome their grief. Grimshaw was again sent for and this time admitted he did not know what to say to help them.

This realization of a profound lack of spirituality was a first step on the road to change. He now tried to reform his life and began to urge his congregation to lead moral lives. He started praying four times a day, a practice he would continue after his conversion. But, as he later admitted, all of this was but an earnest "working out a righteousness of his own" in which he tried to balance the sins of his life with good deeds. He actually kept a folio volume, in which he would record his sins on one page and his good deeds on another, with the hope that at year's end they would balance.[14] Although accurate dating is not possible, it seems he went on like this for seven years, from 1734 to 1741. Sometimes, though, the futility of trying to trying to find salvation through the pathway of good works would overwhelm him and he would despair. Once he actually cried out in the middle of a service: "My friends, we are in a damnable state, and I scarcely know how we are to get out of it."[15] He was beginning to realize, in the words of Frank Baker, that "he could not put himself right with God by a multitude of devotional exercises, however arduous".[16]

During this period of time, in 1735, Grimshaw was married to a widow named Sarah Sutcliffe (1710-1739), whom he loved dearly, but who, after bearing him two children, died at the very young age of twenty-nine.[17] Grimshaw was shattered. He went through months of deep depression—not only mourning for his wife but also sorrowing over his sinful state. He was harassed with sexual temptations, which he resisted, but which left him deeply troubled. Old Deistic notions reappeared. On one occasion, for example, he "was tempted to believe Christ to be but a meer [*sic*] man". On another, the thought entered his mind that the God of the Bible was "a cruel implacable Being".[18]

But in the midst of his despair God sent him deliverance through "the agency of a man and a book".[19] Although Grimshaw does not specifically identify the man, it may well have been the Yorkshire evangelist, Benjamin Ingham (1712-1772), a friend of John Wesley, and the brother-in-law of that wealthy patroness of Evangelical causes, Selina Hastings (1707-1791).[20] Ingham had been ordained in 1735 and had accompanied John and Charles Wesley (1707-1788) as a missionary to the American colony of Georgia. In 1737, after his return to his native town of Ossett in Yorkshire and upon an evangelical conversion, Ingham started to establish what has become known as the Inghamite Methodists after being banned in 1739 from preaching in Anglican churches. By 1755 there were over eighty Inghamite congregations, mainly in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Whether it was Ingham or not, this minister used to ride over to see Grimshaw and rebuke him for his attempts to earn salvation, "Mr. Grimshaw, you are a Jew, you are no believer in Jesus Christ, you are building on the sand."[21]

The book was *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, Explained, Confirmed, & Vindicated* by the Puritan divine John Owen (1616-1683).[22] Visiting a friend in 1741, Grimshaw happened to see the book lying on a table. Seeing from the title on the spine that it was a theological work, he picked it up and went to open it to the title page. Then, a strange event happened. As he was opening the book he felt "an uncommmon heat" flush his face. Thinking that the flash of heat must have come from a fire in the fireplace of the room, he turned towards it but realized that it was too far away to have caused the flash of heat. He opened the book again and experienced a second heat flash. He took these flashes of heat to be divine signs that this book would be of special help to him.[23] And so it proved.

In this classic study of the imputed righteousness of Christ, Owen argued that

justification meant that the sinner who was justified no longer sought to commend himself to God through his own good deeds, but rested in the fact that the righteousness of Christ was reckoned to him, giving him a spotless holiness purer than an angel's. Reading Owen, Grimshaw was enabled, as he later put it, to "renounce myself, every degree of fancied merit and ability, and to embrace Christ only for my all in all. O what light and comfort did I now enjoy in my own soul, and what a taste of the pardoning love of God!"[24]

A couple of decades later, when the London Evangelical William Romaine (1714-1795) asked Grimshaw for a statement of his doctrinal convictions, Grimshaw stated the following with regard to Christ's imputed righteousness:

> ... this very righteousness is sufficient to redeem all mankind; but it only is, and will be imputed to every penitent, believing soul ... Glory be to God for free grace. No reason can be assigned for this; only He would have mercy because He would have mercy. ... in this righteousness, every member of Christ stands, and will stand, complete, irreprovable[25] and acceptable in God's sight, both at death and judgement.[26]

The Haworth Revival

Grimshaw's preaching now began to change as he heralded forth the good news of salvation by faith alone. Within a year of his conversion in 1741, Grimshaw had moved to a new parish, that of Haworth in West Yorkshire. Haworth was an isolated town in what was then a very hilly and bleak part of Yorkshire. Daily existence here was rough and hard, with life expectancy being around twenty-five. Almost half of all the children in the town died before the age of six. Raw sewage flowed down the main street and contaminated the drinking water, and not surprisingly dysentery and typhus were rampant in the town, along with that killer of the eighteenth century, smallpox.[27] People sought refuge in drink, gambling and violence. According to John Newton, the inhabitants of the town "had little more sense of religion than their cattle, and were wild and uneducated like the mountains and rocks which surrounded them".[28] Hard and independent, few of Grimshaw's parishioners exhibited any Christian virtues.[29] But Grimshaw was just the man to reach them.

Heralding the changes about to take place in the village was the installation of a new pulpit in the parish church, St. Michael and All Angels. On the sounding board above the pulpit can still be read the two verses of Scripture that

Grimshaw had engraved on it to graphically display the heart of his ministry: "I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) and "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).[30]

Grimshaw was an extremely gifted preacher who could hold the attention of a congregation for up to two hours while he preached.[31] In part, this was due to the fact that during the course of the sermon he would use what his critics called "market language" to appeal to his hearers' consciences. He was not afraid of using colloquial words in the pulpit or of even coining new ones. Filled with pithy phrases and striking images his style of preaching was well suited to drive home the gospel to the hearts of rough and ready Yorkshire men and women. But the success of his preaching was also due to the sense of the presence of God as he would denounce sin, warn of the dreadful consequences of continuing in it, and urge all and sundry to accept Christ as their only hope of salvation.

Only a handful of Grimshaw's sermons survive. A section of his unpublished treatise "The Admonition of a Sinner" gives one a taste of his preaching style:

> My neighbour, my friend, my heart longs over you. Your manner of life is actually, openly and evidently such that if not seasonably prevented, it will shortly and certainly terminate in your inevitable, intolerable, eternal ruin and destruction. ... Don't be angry with me, please don't. It's because I love you that I thus address you ... I want you without delay to repent of your sins, "to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near". (Isaiah 55:6-7). Acquaint yourself with him, be at peace with him, through his blood, that thereby good may come to you: pardon, peace, grace, heaven, glory, glory for evermore.[32]

At first, Grimshaw was unaware of the fact that the Haworth Revival was a rivulet in a much larger stream of revival inundating the British Isles in the mid-eighteenth century. But soon he made contact with George Whitefield (1714-1770) and the Wesley brothers, and he became a central figure in the awakening. Frank Baker has maintained that apart from the evangelists just mentioned, Grimshaw exercised "probably a more potent influence than that of almost any other religious leader of his time".[33] John Wesley was so taken with Grimshaw's love for Christ and his passion for the salvation of sinners that he once wrote, "A few such as him would make a nation tremble. He carries fire wherever he goes."[34] In fact, Wesley nominated Grimshaw as his

successor in leading the Arminian Methodist movement if he and Charles were to predecease Grimshaw. [35]

Within a few months of Grimshaw's arrival in Haworth, the church began to fill with people and conversions become increasingly common. When he had first come to the church in 1742, he had had a dozen or so people taking communion in a church that could seat 1200. Five years later, the church was full and 1200 took communion.[36] By the late 1740s and early 1750s, summer congregations might reach as high as 6,000! When Whitefield preached at the church in September 1749, for example, over a thousand took communion and six thousand gathered to hear him preach.[37]

The people came from all around the countryside. Some were reached by Grimshaw himself as he travelled through the week to various nearby towns and villages outside of the boundaries of his own parish. Others came through the preaching of various lay preachers whom he began to employ from 1744 onwards.[38] In any given month of 1751, for instance, Grimshaw reckoned that he might preach some sixty times.[39] From the point of view of Anglicanism, this was highly irregular and a source of worry to neighbouring parish ministers. To prevent Grimshaw acting irregularly, some of them had recourse to aiding and abetting violent persecution. George White (d.1751), the nearby vicar of Colne, actually raised an army of local thugs, who were pledged "for the defence of the Church of England" and who were determined to wreak violence upon either Grimshaw or one of his lay preachers if they preached in the adjoining parishes.[40] Consider the experience, for example, of Grimshaw's lay preacher Thomas Lee (1727-1786):

> In the year 1752, and during the winter following, the work of God prospered exceedingly; but persecution raged on every side. ... One day, as I was going through Pateley [Bridge], the captain of the mob [there], who was kept in constant pay, pursued me, and pulled me off my horse. The mob then soon collected about me and ... dragged me into a house by the hair of the head ... then pushed me back, with one or two upon me, and threw me with the small of my back upon the edge of the stone stairs. This nearly broke my back and it was not well for many years after. Thence they dragged me to the common sewer, which carries the dirt of the town to the river. They rolled me in it for some time, then dragged me to the bridge and threw me into the water. They had me mostly on the ground, my strength being quite spent.
>
> My wife, with some friends, now came up. Seeing her busy about

> me, some asked: "What, are you a Methodist?"—gave her several blows which made her bleed at the mouth, and swore they would put her into the river. All this time I lay upon the ground, the mob being undetermined what to do. Some cried out: "Make an end of him"—others were for sparing my life but the dispute was cut short by their agreeing to put some others into the water. So they took them away, leaving me and my wife together. She endeavoured to raise me up, but, having no strength, I dropped to the ground again, and supported me about a hundred yards. Then I was set on horseback, and made a shift to ride softly as far as Michael Granger's house. Here I was stripped from head to foot, and was washed. I left my wet clothes here and rode to Greenhow Hill, where many were waiting for me, and though much bruised and very weak, preached a short sermon from Psalm xxxiv.19: "Many are the troubles of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."[41]

"Mad Grimshaw"

In addition to solid biblical proclamation, Grimshaw's methods for raising the spiritual temperature of the Haworth parish also included what Frank Baker has termed "holy pranks", by reason of which some called the Haworth minister "Mad Grimshaw".[42] For example, John Newton recorded that during Sunday worship Grimshaw sometimes had the congregation sing a psalm—later embellishment made it Psalm 119—while he went out and checked the inns in the town to see if there were any drinking there who should have been in church.[43]

Once he apparently sent two of his churchwardens to round up such loiterers. They were slow in returning, so Grimshaw went in search of them. The psalm was long over when footsteps were heard and the two churchwardens appeared shamefaced with Grimshaw behind them. As Grimshaw came into the church, he cried out, "What think you! The churchwardens who went out to detect others and prevent them from sinning I have found in the inn drinking a pint of ale! For shame! For shame! For shame!"[44]

On another occasion Grimshaw was striding over the moors to preach in a village some distance from Haworth. Two ruffians met him on the way and sizing him up as one like themselves—for he was a big man physically, broad-chested and exceptionally strong[45]—they informed him that they were off "to hear Mad Grimshaw. We shall have some rare sport tonight!" Grimshaw

pretended to be heading for another destination, but eventually agreed to accompany them. They had no idea who he truly was until he got to the place where he was to preach and he went into the pulpit. The two would-be hecklers were silenced, "first by fear, then by shame, and lastly by the conviction of their own sinfulness, as he rallied them with the words: 'Come on! We shall have some rare sport tonight!' "[46]

John Newton also tells the account of how Grimshaw put an end to the horse -racing that was an annual feature of a fair normally held in mid-October. It was, in Grimshaw's words, "a scene of the grossest and most vulgar riot, profligacy, and confusion". Grimshaw sought in vain to end the races, but he did not succeed until in 1759 he made it a matter of extended prayer. That year, quite contrary to the usual pattern of weather for October, it rained incessantly for five days, from October 12 to the October 17. Newton said that it was reported that "old Grimshaw put a stop to the races by his prayers".[47]

"Dissent warmed its hands at Grimshaw's fire"[48]

Grimshaw's impact on the Baptist cause in Yorkshire was profound. Like other centres of Baptist witness in England during the eighteenth century, many of the Yorkshire Baptists were moribund prior to Grimshaw's ministry, owing to such things as Hyper-Calvinism and traditionalism. A goodly number of Grimshaw's converts became Baptists, including such Baptist leaders as William Crabtree, mentioned above, Richard Smith (1710-1764) of Wainsgate, James Hartley (1722-1780) of Haworth, and John Parker (1725-1793) of Barnoldswick.[49] Grimshaw, though, took it all in his stride and was even able to joke about the fact that "so many of my chickens turn ducks!"[50]

Grimshaw's greatest influence on Baptist life and witness in Yorkshire, however, came through one who was not converted under his preaching, but who regularly went to hear him for a time, namely John Fawcett (1740-1817). Fawcett was born on January 6, 1740, at Lidget Green, a small village near Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire. [51] The death of his father, Stephen Fawcett, when he was but twelve and to whom he was deeply attached, made a deep impression upon him. For some time afterwards he was, his son relates, "deeply agitated by fears" concerning his father's final state and he prayed much about it.[52] Reinforcing this early openness to spiritual matters was Fawcett's ardent reading of the Scriptures and a variety of Puritan classics, including *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan (1628-1688), *A Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live* by Richard Baxter (1615-1691), and

the works of John Flavel (*c.*1630-1691). It was not until September, 1755, however, that Fawcett understood and owned as his own the biblical way of salvation by "a God reconciled through the atonement of a suffering Saviour".[53] The key influence at this point was not another author from the Puritan era, but one who has been rightly described as a "revived Puritan," namely George Whitefield.[54]

For the two years following, Fawcett frequently used to trudge the nine or so miles over the moors from Bradford to hear Grimshaw and especially made a point of going when the Lord's Supper was to be administered.[55] In 1764 Fawcett was called to succeed Richard Smith as pastor of Wainsgate Baptist Church in Hebden Bridge, where many of the early members, including Smith, had come to Christ under Grimshaw's powerful ministry. Located but five or six miles from Haworth, this church can be considered to be a direct result of the Haworth Revival.

Fawcett's ministry here and then later in a work right in the town of Hebden Bridge was marked by an irenic Calvinism and catholicity—both marks of the life of Grimshaw as well—a robust commitment to theological education—he began an academy for training Baptist ministers—and missions—William Ward (1769-1823), who went out to India to join William Carey (1761-1834) at Serampore, was trained under Fawcett.[56] In fact, without a gift of £200 that Fawcett gave to the fledgling Baptist Missionary Society in 1793, it is quite possible that Carey would not have been able to sail to India that year.[57] In a way, then, Grimshaw played a small role in the onset of the modern missionary movement. And how the Anglican minister of Haworth would have rejoiced to think of the Baptist minister Carey preaching Christ in India, for, as Grimshaw wrote in the creed he sent to William Romaine, Christ's imputed "righteousness is sufficient to redeem all mankind."[58]

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