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# *Baxterianism: A Lexical History, 1650–1830*

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*The* Oxford English dictionary's *earliest citation for the coinages Baxterianism and Baxterian to refer to the distinctive ecclesiological and theological thought of the seventeenth-century Puritan divine Richard Baxter is dated 1835, with no examples of use after 1839. This is incorrect. These, and related terms, originated in the 1650s and were in regular use during the intervening 185 years (as well as thereafter to the present day). This essay traces the changing signification and usage of these terms from the religious controversies of the seventeenth-century through the development of denominational identities and of a moderate tradition within eighteenth-century dissent that contributed to the development of Unitarianism.*

The earliest citation in the *Oxford English dictionary* for the coinages *Baxterianism* and *Baxterian* (noun and adjective) to refer to the distinctive ecclesiological and theological thought of the seventeenth-century Puritan divine Richard Baxter is dated 1835, with no examples of use after 1839.[1] This is quite wrong.[2] These, and related terms, originated in the 1650s and were in regular use during the intervening 185 years (as well as thereafter until the present day). This essay seeks to fill

CCED = Clergy of the Church of England Database; *CCRB* = N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall (eds), *Calendar of the correspondence of Richard Baxter*, Oxford 1991; *RB* = Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. N. H. Keeble, John Coffey, Tim Cooper and Tom Charlton, Oxford 2020

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[1] <https://www.oed.com>, accessed 5 December 2024. This entry is unrevised and dates from 1887.

[2] As noted seventy-five years ago by Geoffrey F. Nuttall: *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: a study in tradition* (Friends of Dr Williams's Library 5th lecture), London 1951, 2.

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in this gap in the lexical record and to illustrate the changing signification and usage of these terms from their origins in the religious controversies of the seventeenth-century through their part in the development of denominational identities during the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century.

## '*Meer Christianity*'

Ecclesiastical and theological designations are always tricky, and usually inadequate, when it comes to the dynamic religious politics and experience of the seventeenth century, but even in this fluid context Baxter's elusiveness is exceptional, and, moreover, quite deliberate:

> the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible wherever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible: But must you know what Sect or party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call *Meer Christians* by the name of a *Party* … I am of that Party which is so against Parties. If the Name of CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLICK CHRISTIAN.[3]

'The Creed, Lord's Prayer, & Decalogue alone' comprised the 'Essentialls or Fundamentalls' of this 'mere Christianity'.[4] In the many negotiations in which he participated throughout the second half of the seventeenth century attempting to achieve a measure of inclusiveness in the national Church and of toleration of those excluded from it, Baxter was consistently unwilling to go beyond these to define the limits of orthodoxy.[5] At the national level, he met with no success, but locally the Worcestershire Association of ministers came together in the 1650s on the basis of a profession of faith inspired by this ideal of inclusivity regardless of particular theological or ecclesiological views. It played a significant part in inspiring an association movement across England and Ireland.[6]

[3] Richard Baxter, *Church-history of the government of bishops and their councils, abbreviated*, London 1680, sig. b1. Accordingly, in 1672 Baxter declined to apply for a licence to preach under the Declaration of Indulgence by any denominational label but instead applied as one whose religion 'is meerly Christian': *RB* iv. 286; *CCRB* ii. 140. A full edition of the letters is in preparation for Oxford University Press under the general editorship of Johanna Harris and Alison Searle.

[4] *RB* ii. 52.

[5] See further N. H. Keeble, '"Take heed of being too forward in imposing on others": orthodoxy and heresy in the Baxterian tradition', in David Loewenstein and John Marshall (eds), *Heresy, literature and politics in early modern England*, Cambridge 2006, 282–305.

[6] Richard Baxter, *Christian concord: or, The agreement of the associated churches and pastors of Worcestershire*, London 1653. For the Worcestershire Association and the mid-century association movement see William A. Shaw, *A history of the English Church during the civil wars and under the commonwealth, 1640–1660*, London 1900, ii. 252–74, 440–56; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, London 1965, 64–76, and 'The Worcestershire association: its membership', this JOURNAL i (1950), 74–100; Joel Halcomb, 'The association movement and the politics of church settlement during the interregnum', in Elliott Vernon and Hunter Powell (eds), *Church polity and politics in the British Atlantic*

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Baxter's theology is no more readily categorisable than his ecclesiology. His 'Summary of Catholick reconciling Theology' in *Richard Baxter's catholick theologie* (1675) sought to 'end our common controversies, in doctrinalls, about Predestination, Redemption, justification, assurance, perseverance, & such like' and to accommodate apparently opposing views by proving through a dialogue between A, C and R, that is, an Arminian, a Calvinist and a Reconciler, that 'there is no considerable difference between the Arminians & Calvinists'.[7] His stress on the importance of moral obedience in the scheme of salvation and his hypothetical universalism, rejecting the limited atonement of Calvinism and maintaining the decree of election to salvation but not to damnation, showed the influence of Amyraldus[8] and led to a life-long campaign against what he took to be the Antinomian tendencies of high Calvinism.

*Reconcilers* was Baxter's own preferred term for the moderate Puritans or 'Middle-way Men' who shared his views, 'of no Sect or Party, but abhorring the very Name of Parties' who 'were ruled by *Prudent Charity* and allwaies called out to both the parties, that the Churches must be Vnited uppon the termes of primitiue simplicity, & that we must haue *Vnity in things Necessary, & Liberty in things unnecessary, & Charity in all*'.[9] In the *Reliquiæ* he maintains that these Reconcilers, who 'went the middle way', 'dis-engaged faithful men', 'meere Catholicks; men of no faction, nor sideing with any party, but owning that which was good in all', were, 'though the vulgar called them by the name of Presbyterians', 'as far as I could discover … the greatest number of the godly ministers & people throughout England'.[10]

*world*, c. *1635–66*, Manchester 2020, 174–9; and Polly Ha, 'Freedom of association and ecclesiastical independence', in Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page and Joel Halcomb (eds), *Church life: pastors, congregations, and the experience of dissent in seventeenth-century England*, Oxford 2019, 101–18.

[7] *RB* ii. 557, 561. For this strain in seventeenth-century English theology, and for Baxter's theological thought see Alan Clifford, *Atonement and justification: English evangelical theology, 1640–1790*, Oxford 1990; David P. Field, *Rigide Calvinism in a softer dresse: the moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630–1705*, Edinburgh 2004; Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (eds), *Drawn into controversie: reformed theological diversity and debates within seventeenth-century British Puritanism*, Göttingen 2011; Michael J. Lynch, *John Davenant's hypothetical universalism*, Oxford 2021; Jonathan D. Moore, *English hypothetical universalism: John Preston and the softening of reformed theology*, Grand Rapids, MI 2007; J. I. Packer, *The redemption and restoration of man in the thought of Richard Baxter*, Vancouver 2001; and Dewey D. Wallace Jr, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660–1714*, Oxford 2011.

[8] Baxter defends his high regard for Amyraldus in *Certain disputations of right to sacraments*, London 1657, pref., sigs B1v–C2v; cf. *CCRB* i. 117–18.

[9] *RB* ii. 192, i. 444, citing Rupert Meldenius, as noted in n. 803. Baxter left among his papers a summary statement of the Reconcilers' position: 'The Church reformation desired by the Reconcilers: in ten articles. Written by Richard Baxter … For the use of posterity', 1661 (Dr Williams's Library, Richard Baxter treatises, v. 161); Alan Argent, *The Richard Baxter treatises: a catalogue and guide*, Woodbridge 2018, 134–5.

[10] *RB* i. 373; ii. 16; i. 429; ii. 14.

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## *'Jesuitical, Arminian, and Socinian principles': the 1650s*

*Reconcilers* may have been Baxter's term for them, but it was no one else's, nor was everyone persuaded by either the intellectual coherence or the moral integrity of those to whom it referred. The terms *Baxterian* and *Baxterianism* came into use in the controversial literature of the second half of the seventeenth century to impugn and denigrate the alleged idiosyncrasy, heterodoxy and self-contradictory nature of Baxter's thought. Indeed, it was his very first publication, *Aphorismes of justification* (1649), that provoked opponents into reaching for the term *Baxterian* in their attempt to categorise, and stigmatise, his insistence on the need for continuing moral effort and obedience, thereby apparently introducing conditionality into the covenant of grace contrary to strict Calvinism.[11] John Crandon, rector of Fawley, Hampshire, and a high Calvinist, appalled by Baxter's 'foul-subverting doctrines' that asperse 'the whole Doctrine of the Gospel and the reformed Churches of Christ with the black brand of Antinomianism, reserving onely the *Papists* and *Arminians*, whom he followeth, free of it', condemned what he called 'Baxterian Faith' as promoted by those whom he rather wonderfully styled Baxter's 'Circumforaneous Legates', that is, the members of the Worcestershire Association of ministers.[12] William Robertson, holding that 'Jesuitical, Arminian, and Socinian principles' are 'much more dangerous to the Church, then the worst of the blasphemous delusions of *Familists*, *Ranters*, *Quakers* &c.', referred repeatedly to 'Baxterian' definitions and principles, which he took to be 'Semi-Arminian'.[13]

The adjective quickly became a convenient way in other controversies to disparage Baxter's views. In the third part of his massive *Anti-paedobaptism* (1657) the leading Baptist John Tombes rejected Baxter's argument for paedobaptism on the precedent of the Jewish church as 'a piece of *Baxterian* non-sense' since 'the Jewish Church national is broken off, and … churchmembership by birth is altered into churchmembership by faith'.[14]

[11] On this controversy see Hans Boersma, *A hot pepper corn: Richard Baxter's doctrine of justification in its seventeenth-century context of controversy*, Zoetermeer 1993; Tim Cooper, *Fear and polemic in seventeenth-century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*, Aldershot 2001; and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Richard Baxter's *Apology* (1654): its occasion and composition', this JOURNAL iv (1953), 69–76.

[12] John Crandon, *Mr. Baxter's aphorisms exorized and anthorized*, London 1654, sigs A2v–A3r.

[13] William Robertson, *'Iggeret Hammashkil: or, An admonitory epistle unto Mr Rich. Baxter, and Mr Tho. Hotchkiss*, London 1655, 2, 64, cf. 29, 48, 51, 56, 58, 63, 65–6, 69, 70, 122–3, 141. Robertson was a graduate of Edinburgh University (title-page) but he has not been further identified.

[14] John Tombes, *Anti-paedobaptism: or, The third part, being, a full review of the dispute concerning infant-baptism*, London 1657, 514.

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The fiercely episcopalian and royalist controversialist Thomas Pierce, after the Restoration President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and dean of Salisbury, controverting Baxter's argument in *The Grotian religion discovered* (1658), could not 'conceive of any such thing as *Grotian Popery*, more then any such thing as *Baxterian Paganism*. For though you *favour* the *Pagans*, yet doth it not follow that you are *one*'.[15] As the Restoration approached, the term appeared also in political contexts. When, in July 1659, which, with reference to the return of the Rump after the collapse of Richard Cromwell's Protectorate, he styled 'the I. Year of our second Deliverance or Return to the *Liberty* of a *Free-State*', the Fifth Monarchist and republican John Rogers, arguing against William Prynne's promotion of the return of the members secluded from the Long Parliament in December 1648 and against Baxter's opposition to the Army's intervention in forcibly ending Richard's Protectorate in his recently published *A holy commonwealth*, damned both: 'how PRINIAN Mr. *Baxters* words and Arguments are … and how BAXTERIAN, Mr. *Prynne*'s proofs are for … indeed Mr. *B.* is but Mr. *P.* in more sobriety, and Mr. *P.* is but Mr. *B.* in more bitterness and asperity'.[16]

## *'Hodg-podge Divinity': the later seventeenth century*

In the preface to his *Church-history of the government of bishops* (1681) Baxter wrote that he had heard of a '*Scots* Narrative of the *Treasons*, *Fornications*, *Witchcrafts*, and other wickedness of the *Scottish* Presbyterians' whose '*Author knoweth not what to call me, unless it be a* Baxterian, *as intending to be a* Hæresiarcha, *being neither Papist, nor of the Church of* England, *nor Presbyterian, nor Independent*, &c.'.[17] This '*Scots* narrative' was an anonymous pamphlet with a London imprint which took the occasion of the execution for treason in Edinburgh of the Covenanter ministers John Kid and John King following the battle of Drumclog in May 1679 to animadvert on both Scots and English Presbyterians and their '*Jesuitical Tricks*' seeking 'to ruine the Fortress of the *Protestant* Cause'. What had been reported to Baxter was a passage in its preface:

> While some of your leading Dissenters openly avow, that they are neither *Presbyterians*, nor Independents, *&c.* Nor of any other known name, do they not prompt us to believe, that they may be *Papists*, or at least are so fond of their own Conceits,

[15] Thomas Pierce, *The new discoverer discover'd by way of answer to Mr Baxter his pretended discovery of the Grotian religion*, London 1659, 168.

[16] John Rogers, *Diapoliteia: a Christian concertation with Mr. Prin, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Harrington, for the true cause of the Commonwealth*, London 1659, sig. B2v, 6.

[17] Baxter, *Church-history of the government of bishops*, sig. a4.

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as to be of nothing, but of themselves. So *Arius* was an *Arian*, *Novatus* a *Novatian* … I know not what Mr. *Baxter* can be called, but a *Papist*, or *Baxterian*, he is not of the Church of *England*; it is manifest folly, and injustice to call him *Papist*; He saith, he is no *Presbyterian*, *&c.* He must therefore like the Founder of an Heresie, be denominated from himself.[18]

Baxter did indeed say that 'You could not (except a Catholick Christian) have trulier called me, than an *Episcopal-Presbyterian-Independent*' (adding that 'I never found in Scripture any Obligation that I must needs be of a *Faction*'), but he denied that in this he was singular: 'For ought I know most of the *Nonconformists* are such.'[19]

If Baxter's pursuit of catholic inclusiveness could strike unsympathetic contemporaries as perversely idiosyncratic, it seemed to them also hopelessly self-contradictory. This was the repeated charge of the Tory pamphleteer and press censor, Roger L'Estrange, Baxter's inveterate opponent (as he was of all Nonconformists). In his *The casuist uncas'd: in a dialogue betwixt Richard and Baxter, with a moderator between them for quietnesse sake* (1681) he allocated to the two interlocutors *Richard* and *Baxter* apparently contradictory statements from Baxter's writings (often with exact page references) on the ecclesiastical politics of the Interregnum and Restoration periods, to show that '*Richard* and *Baxter* [are] never to be reconcil'd' despite the best efforts of the Moderator and that Baxter's professions of loyalty and reasonableness on behalf of himself, the Nonconformists and the Presbyterians, are worthless as repeatedly subverted by his own words: 'He ever *opposed* what he sometimes *encouraged*. A Baxterism.' For L'Estrange, the Parliamentarians 'who attack'd the King' are straightforwardly 'The Baxterians'.[20]

Like his ecclesiastical non-partisanship, Baxter's theological middle way was challenged as both singular and an incoherent muddle. In 1696, the Congregational minister Samuel Young asserted that 'Calvinism and Arminianism have a Consistency, but Baxterianism hath none, but is a

[18] [Anon.], *The spirit of popery speaking out of the mouths of phanatical protestants, or the last speeches of Mr. John Kid and Mr. John King, two Presbyterian ministers, who were executed for high treason and rebellion, at Edinburgh, August the 14th 1679: with animadversions, and the history of the archbishop of St Andrews his murder*, London 1680, pref., unsigned first page and sig. 1*v.

[19] Richard Baxter, *A third defence of the cause of peace*, London 1681, 1st pagination, 110.

[20] Roger L'Estrange, *The casuist uncas'd: in a dialogue betwixt Richard and Baxter, with a moderator between them for quietnesse sake*, London 1681, 3, 50, 42. L'Estrange finds particularly rich pickings in Baxter's 1658 *A holy commonwealth* and in the series of six defences of the Nonconformists that he published between 1679 and 1681 (on which see N. H. Keeble, 'Rewriting the public narrative: the publishing career of Richard Baxter 1662–96', in Tessa Whitehouse and N. H. Keeble (eds), *Textual transformations: purposing and repurposing books from Richard Baxter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge: essays in honour of Isabel Rivers*, Oxford 2019, 97–114, esp. pp. 103–11).

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mere Gallimophery, Hodg-podge Divinity'.[21] Making the same argument in his *The parasalene dismantled of her cloud: or, Baxterianism barefac'd*, the Welshman Thomas Edwards, a high Calvinist Congregationalist, printed two sets of three columns of doctrinal statements headed respectively 'Conformist', 'Baxterian' and 'Non-Conformist', and 'Papist', 'Baxterian' and 'Quaker', showing Baxter's agreement with first one then the other, a device that mimicked the representation of '*Truth*' forty years earlier in *Rich: Baxter's confession of his faith* in a middle column flanked on the left by 'Antinom[ians]' and on the right by 'Papists and others in the other extream'.[22]

Edwards's *Baxterianism barefac'd* was the first of the works addressed by the anonymous author of *A censure of three scandalous pamphlets* (1699). While he counts himself among 'zealous *Anti-Baxterians*' such as Edwards, he is appalled that in the course of attacking Baxter Edwards defended the high Calvinist Tobias Crisp whose sermons from the 1640s had been reprinted in 1690 by his son Samuel:[23] 'That you should charge Mr. *Baxter* as a Writer against sound Conformists, and Nonconformists, about Justification, *&c.* and yet vindicate Dr. *Crisp* much more corrupt than he, and more opposite to the Authors you cite … fills us all with amazement.' He is consequently dismayed that 'any Advocate for Dr. *Crisp* should … appear against *Baxterianism:* For which sound *Calvinists* will give you no thanks, knowing you often oppose not Error with Truth'.[24] Addressing 'all sound Protestants, who own *Justification* by *Faith only*, not *without* Faith, nor by Faith *and Works*', he opines that '*Baxterianism*, I think, is spiced Popery, but *Crispianism* is spiced Rantism.' He is, however, a far more zealous anti-Crispian than anti-Baxterian. He 'abhors all that deny the Integrity of *Baxterians*' and he would have the author 'Carry it civilly towards sober *Baxterians*': 'I am glad we have their help against *Crispianism.*' He does though 'wish their Doctrine end not in *Arminianism* at last; some are gone,

[21] [Samuel Young], *Vindiciae anti-Baxterianae: or, Some animadversions on a book, intituled Reliquiae Baxterianae*, London 1696, 111.

[22] Thomas Edwards, *The parasalene dismantled of her cloud: or, Baxterianism barefac'd: drawn from a literal transcript of Mr. BAXTERs, and the judgment of others, in the most radical doctrines of faith; compar'd with those of the orthodox, both conformist and Nonconformist; and transferred over by way of test, unto the papist and quaker*, London 1696, 24–46, 223–33; Richard Baxter, *Rich: Baxter's confession of his faith*, London 1655, 151–87.

[23] *Christ alone exalted: being the complete works of Tobias Crisp*, London 1690. In his prefatory epistle 'To the Christian Reader', Samuel animadverted on Pinners' Hall lectures by 'the Captain of those that oppose such Doctrines' as were preached by his father, that is, Baxter (sigs A3v–A4v). The republication of Crisp's sermons prompted Baxter to resume his lifelong campaign against Antinomianism in *The scripture gospel defended, and Christ, grace, and free justification vindicated against the libertines*, London 1690.

[24] [Anon.], *A censure of three scandalous pamphlets*, London 1699, 3, 4.

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others going, more would, had not Mr. *Williams*'s Restrictions and refining of his Master's Doctrine hindred'.[25]

The reference to 'Mr. *Williams*'s Restrictions' is to Daniel Williams's intervention in defence of 'his Master' Baxter in the controversy provoked within dissent by the republication of Crisp's sermons. As another tract remarked, '*Baxterianism* if conceiv'd' was, in the time of Crisp and William Twisse, 'not then come to birth', but by the 1690s it served frequently as a rhetorical stick with which high Calvinists could beat moderate Calvinists.[26] In an anonymous pamphlet on the rival tendencies within dissent of '*Crispianism* or *Antinomianism*' on the one hand and '*Arminianism* and *Socinianism*' on the other, to assert 'That is *Baxterianism* all over' is sufficient to discredit a theological proposition by associating it with the latter; the views of such 'Semipopish Persons' as Daniel Williams, Samuel Clark, Vincent Alsop and John Humphrey are what '*lay in the bottom of* Baxterianism'; Williams is, if not Baxterian, then 'a *Semi-Baxterian*'.[27] In the tract *Mans Sinfulness and misery by nature asserted* (1700) by John England,[28] it was Baxter's soteriology, akin to the teaching of the '*Salmurian Professors*' and differing from both 'the Assemblies Confession and Catechism, and the 39 Articles of the *Church England*', that was the defining feature of '*Baxterianism*, or that new Scheme of Divinity, Mr. *Baxter* has presented the world with'. In England's view, Baxter's argument that justification is a continuing process of moral improvement denies the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and:

> If *imputed righteousness* be rejected, *then we must establish our own righteousness in Justification* … Accordingly Mr. Baxter (if I apprehend him) makes Faith and Obedience to be all one … making no distinction between *Faith* and *Gospel-Works*

[25] Ibid. 29, 30, 31, 32.

[26] A Presbyterian, *An apology for congregational divines: against the charge of 1. Crispianism or Antinomianism*, London 1698, 15. On Daniel Williams, the Crispian controversy and its consequences see Roger Thomas, 'Parties in Nonconformity', in C. G. Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H. L. Short and Roger Thomas, *The English Presbyterians: from Elizabethan Puritanism to modern Unitarianism*, London 1968, 93–112 at pp. 107–8, and 'Presbyterians in transition', 113–74 at pp. 117–23, 127–30, and Roger Thomas, 'The break-up of Nonconformity', in Geoffrey F. Nuttall and others, *The beginnings of Nonconformity*, London 1964, 33–60 at pp. 39–60.

[27] [Anon.], *Three contending brethren, Mr. Williams, Mr. Lob, Mr. Alsop, reconcil'd, and made friends; by an occasional conference with three notorious hereticks, Mr. Humphreys, Mr. Clark, Dr Crisp*, London 1698, 3, 4, 22.

[28] His title-page describes England as 'Minister of the Gospel in *Sherborne* in *Dorsetshire*'. He is not included among the Nonconformists listed in Alexander Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after ejection: a review (1690–1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in England and Wales*, Manchester 1917, but from *An answer to a letter of Mr. John England's*, London 1704, by the vicar of Sherborne, James Lacy, it appears that he was a 'Nonconformist Teacher' there (sig. A2v). England's *Letter* is not known to be extant.

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… And thus the *Gospel-Covenant* may properly be called a *Covenant of Works*. Tho' 'tis founded in Grace … yet the terms of it being Obedience, and not *Faith* as opposed to *Gospel-Works* … contrary to the Apostle, Rom. 4. 16. With many other consequences of suspected truth, that flow from this *Thesis* (*Christ's dying, nullius loco, as a legal Representative*) which … . make up a Scheme of new Divinity, which hath now obtained the name of *Baxterianism*.[29]

Two years later, England wrote that '*we are crumbling and dividing into Parties; Mr.* B. *is made the Head of a Party. The name* Baxterian *is already coined, and goes current among some; not to mention the opposite member*, Antinomian'.[30]

## *Moderate Calvinism: the early eighteenth century*

These examples from the 1690s are all concerned with what they take to be the heterodoxy of Baxter's soteriology, but as the seventeenth century turned, and with Nonconformity now a legally recognised and publicly admissible fact of the religious life of the nation, the term *Baxterianism* began to lose some of its disparaging force and to assume more positive connotations; as the modern ecclesiastical historian Geoffrey F. Nuttall remarked, 'Baxter's critical eclecticism proved more attractive to the eighteenth century than to his own.'[31] The adjective *Baxterian* did not, though, immediately lose its polemical edge. The non-juror Charles Leslie, appalled that Edmund Calamy's *Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History of his life and times* (1702) promoted that '*Arch-Rebel*' and '*Blac*k Saint' Baxter and his '*Lewd* and *Poisonous*' book, spoke with heavy irony of those who fought against Charles I as 'these *Baxterian Saints*'. With similar scorn Isaac Sharpe characterised Stephen Marshall, whom Calamy had praised, as a 'thorough-pac'd *Baxterian* Divine' for encouraging resistance to the king.[32]

We may suppose that it was their lingering polemical connotations at this date that led Edmund Calamy himself to eschew both *Baxterian* and

[29] John England, *Mans sinfulness and misery by nature asserted … whereunto is added a disputation concerning the headship of Adam and Christ, and the imputation of the sin of the one, and the righteousness of the other*, London 1700, 383, 417–18.

[30] Idem, *A reply to Mr. Samuel Clifford: wherein his scurrillous and abusive reflections, (under pretence of vindicating the late Reverend Mr. Baxter,) are shewed to be groundless: and the old protestant doctrine, of justification … is … vindicated*, London 1702, sig. A2v. England was responding to Clifford's *An account of the judgment of the late Reverend Mr. Baxter: concerning the imputation of Adams sin, and Christs righteousness*, London [1701], itself a reply to England's *Mans sinfulness*.

[31] Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge*, 2.

[32] [Charles Leslie], *A case of present concern: in a letter to a member of parliament*, [London 1703?], 2, 4, 1, 12; [Isaac Sharpe], *Animadversions on some passages of Mr. Edmund Calamy's abridgment of Mr. Baxter's history*, London 1704, 39. Sharpe would appear to be the schoolmaster and curate in Stepney recorded in the CCED at <theclergydatabase.org.uk>, ID 102570.

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*Baxterianism* in his series of publications editing, redacting and promoting Baxter's works. In the preface to his 1707 edition of Baxter's *Practical works*, the word *Baxterianism* does not appear, even though Edmund Calamy gives a pretty good definition of its ecclesiological character:

> On the Controversies about Church Government … Mr. *Baxter* was all along against Extreams. He neither fell in with the *Erastian*, nor *Episcopal*, nor *Presbyterian*, nor *Independent* Party intirely; but thought that all of them had so much truth in common among them, as would have made these Kingdoms happy, had it been unanimously and soberly reduc'd to practice, by Prudent and Charitable Men.[33]

Similarly, neither *Baxterian* nor *Baxterianism* occur where they might be expected, in the three volumes of Calamy's *Defence of moderate non-conformity* (1703–5). This *Defence* was written in response to hostile comment from members of the established Church on the positive characterisation of the moderate Nonconformity that in the tenth chapter of his 1702 *Abridgment* of Baxter's 1696 *Reliquiae Baxterianae* Calamy saw exemplified in those ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. While he might avoid the terms *Baxterian* and *Baxterianism*, Calamy's summary of the grounds for, and nature of, moderate Nonconformity was nevertheless thoroughly Baxterian, as he explicitly acknowledged when he identified as its source Baxter's *The English Nonconformity, as under King Charles II and King James II. truly stated and argued* (1689).[34] The terms were similarly eschewed in the first sustained history of Nonconformity, *The history of the Puritans or Protestant Non-conformists … with an account of their principles* by the Congregational minister Daniel Neal, even though Baxter is a frequent presence in its text.[35]

By the time of Neal's *History*, however, the terms were in the process of becoming admissible in Nonconformist discourse. In his account of the influence of Baxter and his '"middle way" … between Calvinism and Arminianism' on early eighteenth-century dissent, and on Philip Doddridge in particular, Nuttall used the term *Baxterianism*.[36] In so doing, he

[33] Richard Baxter, *Practical works*, London 1707, p. viii. As noted in *RB* iv. 370, Calamy identified himself as the author of this unattributed preface in his autobiography, *An historical account of my own life*, ed. J. T. Rutt, London 1829, ii. 68.

[34] Edmund Calamy, *An abridgment of Mr. Baxter's history of his life and times: with an account of many others of those … who were ejected after the restauration … and a continuation of their history, till the year 1691*, London 1702, pref., sig. a2v. Roger Thomas was in no doubt that the moderate, middle-way man Calamy was recognised as a Baxterian by his contemporaries ('Presbyterians in transition', in Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *English Presbyterians*, 111–74 at pp. 134–5).

[35] Daniel Neal, *The history of the Puritans or Protestant non-conformists … with an account of their principles*, London 1732–8.

[36] Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge*, 3. Elsewhere, Nuttall described Baxter as 'Doddridge's master and (now) mine': 'A personal appreciation', in Geoffrey F. Nuttall (ed.), *Philip Doddridge, 1702–51: his contribution to English religion*, London 1951, 154–63 at p. 154.

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was following Doddridge himself, as demonstrated by Robert Strivens in a chapter on 'Baxterianism and moderate Calvinism' in his study of *Philip Doddridge and the shaping of evangelical dissent*.[37] Strivens cites Doddridge's characterisation in a letter of 1722 of John Jennings, whose academy at Kibworth Harcourt, Leicestershire, Doddridge was then attending, as one who 'has not follow'd ye doctrines or phrases of any particular party; but is sometimes a calvinist, sometimes an arminian, & sometimes a Baxterian, as truth & evidence determine him'.[38] This is to distinguish the Baxterian middle way from each of the alternatives, but when in a 1748 letter Doddridge describes 'Mr. K' (Andrew Kippis), a 'very suitable' prospective ministerial candidate for a vacant pastorate, as a 'Baxterian Calvinist (which, by the way, I think a very proper expression)', he is clearly thinking of this middle way as (in a phrase he uses in the letter) 'the moderately calvinistical way'.[39] 'Moderate Calvinist' was a collocation that he used of himself and, approvingly, of others[40] – indeed, the Unitarian minister and historian Alexander Gordon, who thought as highly of Doddridge as he did of Baxter, chose this phrase to characterise Doddridge's theological temper.[41] Doddridge declared that he could not 'sufficiently admire'

[37] Robert Strivens, *Philip Doddridge and the shaping of Evangelical dissent*, London 2015, 21–45, instancing (pp. 21–2) other twentieth-century ecclesiastical historians who used the term to denote 'a middle way between opposing theological extremes' within dissent.

[38] Quoted from the manuscript in Tessa Whitehouse, *The textual culture of English Protestant dissent, 1720–1800*, Oxford 2015, 59–60, and by Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, 24, from *The correspondence and diary of Philip Doddridge, D.D.*, ed. John Doddridge Humphreys, London 1829–31, i. 156.

[39] *Letters to and from the Rev. Philip Doddridge D. D.*, ed. Thomas Stedman, Shrewsbury 1790, 285 (quoted in Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, 24).

[40] For examples see Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, 24–5. It was this phrase in Doddridge that prompted Alan Clifford's *Atonement and justification*, which argues, *inter alia*, that Baxter's views were in many respects more faithful to Calvin than John Owen's and 'a legitimate expression of Reformation theology' (pp. vii, 197), a view that had been advanced by Alexander Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian history with appended lectures on Baxter and Priestley*, London 1895, 98, which held that although 'as a divisive appellation, Baxterian, even within the present century, was employed as a term of theological reproach, to denote a kind of halfway house between Calvinism and Arminianism … I have no hesitation in expressing the conclusion that Baxter's Calvinism differed from that of the Westminster divines, simply by the purity of its adhesion to the original type, unaffected by the anti-Arminian reaction'. See further the appendix on Doddridge's moderate (Baxterian) Calvinism in Alan Clifford, *The good doctor: Philip Doddridge of Northampton: a tercentenary tribute*, Norwich 2002, 253–63. This references Gordon's view.

[41] Alexander Gordon, *Philip Doddridge and the catholicity of the old dissent*, London [1951], 13. This lecture had first been published in 1922 in Gordon's *Addresses, biographical and historical*.

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Baxter's 'incomparable writings', and described himself as a 'Baxterian Calvinist',[42] so it is no wonder that the term *Baxterianism* was so familiar to him, and he so relaxed about it, that in a letter of 1724 to John Mason, afterwards a Congregational minister, he could use it with facetious irony to denote the first step on the path to heresy:

> You very expressly tell me that orthodoxy requires you to deny the salvability of the heathen; and then you desire me to send you an abstract of the best arguments I can meet with for the defence of the contrary opinion. What if such a dissertation should fall into the hands of some durus pater or durior frater? Then am I caught in the very act of Baxterianism; and by consequence am an Arminian, and therefore an Arian, and therefore, perhaps, a deist … My good sir, haereticus esse nolo.[43]

It was equally familiar to his correspondent Samuel Bates. Bates was the long-serving (1705–61) minister of the Presbyterian church at Warminster, Wiltshire, although in 1709 some members of his congregation had suspected him of Arianism and seceded.[44] In a letter of 1747 Bates 'heartily join[ed]' with Doddridge 'in thinking that the *middle way between both extremes* is the only one to keep us from ruin' and could write of 'a moderate Calvinist alias Baxterian'.[45]

## *'A middle path between Calvinism and Arminianism': the later eighteenth century*

The difficulty of walking this middle way was caught by the first sustained attempt to characterise Baxterianism, Andrew Kippis's long footnote appended in the second volume (1780) of his revised second edition of *Biographia Britannica* to the highly appreciative article on Baxter in the first edition.[46] In the 1740s Kippis had been a student of Doddridge, whom he greatly admired, and was afterwards minister successively to

[42] *Correspondence of Doddridge*, i. 368, 426; *The works of Philip Doddridge*, ed. E. Williams and E. Parsons, London 1802–5, v. 536 (all quoted in Clifford, *The good doctor*, 136, 137). Doddridge did also say that 'I am in all the most important points a Calvinist': *Correspondence of Doddridge*, i. 439.

[43] *Correspondence of Doddridge*, i. 438–9 (quoted in Gordon, *Philip Doddridge*, 31).

[44] *Victoria county history of Wiltshire*, at <https://british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol8/pp/124-128>.

[45] *Correspondence of Doddridge*, iv. 534; Doddridge manuscripts, quoted by Jeremy Goring, 'The break-up of the Old Dissent', in Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *English Presbyterians*, 175–218 at p. 207 (Doddridge as a leader of the 'Middle Way Men' is discussed at pp. 186–8).

[46] [William Oldys *et al.* (eds)], *Biographia Britannica: or, The lives of the most eminent persons who have flourished in Great Britain and Ireland*, London 1747–66, 1/ii. 557–65. This article is signed 'E' signifying John Campbell.

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Congregational churches in Dorking, Surrey, and Sleaford, Lincolnshire, and to a Presbyterian congregation in Westminster,[47] a biography that suggests a middle-way man, but he nevertheless took a very measured view of Baxterianism:

> Mr. Baxter hath had the honour, if it may be deemed such, of having given rise to a distinct religious denomination. His Theological System has been called Baxterianism, and those who embrace his sentiments, are stiled Baxterians. Baxterianism strikes a middle path between Calvinism and Arminianism, endeavouring, in some degree, though perhaps not very consistently, to unite both schemes, and to avoid the supposed errors of each. The Baxterians, we apprehend, believe in the doctrines of Election, effectual Calling, and other tenets of Calvinism, and, consequently, suppose that certain number, determined upon in the divine Counsels, will infallibly be saved. This they think necessary to secure the ends of Christ's interposition. But then, on the other hand, they reject the doctrine of Reprobation, and admit that our blessed Lord, in a certain sense, died for all; and that such a portion of grace is allotted to every man, as renders it his own fault, if he doth not attain to eternal happiness. If he improves the common grace given to all mankind, this will be followed by that special grace which will end in his final acceptance and salvation. Whether the Baxterians are of opinion, that any, besides the elect, will *actually* make such a right use of common grace, as to obtain the other, and, at length, come to Heaven, we cannot actually say. There may possibly be a difference of sentiment upon the subject, according as they approach nearer to Calvinism or to Arminianism. Mr. Baxter appears, likewise, to have modelled the doctrines of Justification, and the perseverance of the Saints, in a manner which was not agreeable to the rigid Calvinists.

Kippis recognises that 'Some foreign Divines, in the last century, struck nearly into the same path; and particularly, in France, Mons. Le Blanc, Mr. Cameron, the celebrated Mons. Amyrault', but what is striking is that he holds that 'For a considerable time, the Nonconformist Clergy in England, were divided into scarcely any but two doctrinal parties, the Calvinists and the Baxterians', with but 'a few direct Arminians'. 'Of late', however, 'since many of the Dissenters have become more bold in their religious sentiments, the Baxterians among them have been less numerous. However, they are still a considerable body.'[48]

[47] Alan Ruston, 'Andrew Kippis (1725–1795)', *ODNB* at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-15642>, accessed 19 February 2025.

[48] Andrew Kippis, with the assistance of other gentlemen, *Biographia Britannica: or, The lives of the most eminent persons who have flourished in Great Britain and Ireland … the second edition, with corrections, enlargements, and the addition of new lives*, London 1778–[95?], ii. 10–22 at p. 22. This article is signed 'K' for Kippis. Only five volumes of this revised second edition (1778–93) and an incomplete sixth volume ([1795?]), reaching the letter F, were published: Isabel Rivers, 'Biographical dictionaries and their uses from Bayle to Chalmers', in Isabel Rivers (ed.), *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England: new essays*, London 2001, 135–69 at p. 167 n. 73.

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This is a considered account of Baxterianism, neither unsympathetic nor wholly persuaded of its consistency or theological coherence. The words *Baxterian* and *Baxterianism* had not appeared in the article on Baxter signed 'T' for Thomas Birch published in 1735 in the *General dictionary, historical and separate*[49] nor in John Campbell's entry on Baxter in the 1747 first edition of *Biographia Britannica*, even though what Campbell describes sounds very like Baxterianism. He noted that Baxter's non-partisan liberalism and disinclination to recommend himself 'to popular applause by a rigid behaviour … inclined some to believe he had a religion of his own' and that, for this reason, when Sir John Gayer 'bequeathed a legacy by will to men of moderate notions, he could think of no better expression than this, that they should be of Mr. Baxter's religion'.[50] Nevertheless, he does not designate this 'religion of his own', nor 'Mr. Baxter's religion', *Baxterianism*. Thirty years later, however, *Baxterianism* and *Baxterian* were sufficiently current (notice the present tense: 'are stiled Baxterians') for Kippis so to designate what he took to be a significant strand in dissent, past and present. He was, however, not sanguine about its future: 'The denomination, like other theological distinctions which have prevailed in the world, will probably, in a course of time, sink into desuetude, till it is either wholly forgotten, or the bare memory of it be only preserved in some historical production.'[51]

## *Towards Unitarianism: from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century*

As the eighteenth century turned to the nineteenth, Baxter had his admirers among the Romantics, none more perceptive than Coleridge.[52]

[49] John Peter Bernard, Thomas Birch, John Lockman and other hands, *A general dictionary, historical and critical: in which a new and accurate translation of that of the celebrated Mr. Bayle … is included; and interspersed with several thousand lives never before published*, London 1734–41, iii. 49–57. For the role of eighteenth-century biographical dictionaries in shaping the understanding of dissent, and for their entries on Baxter in particular see Isabel Rivers, 'The idea of Puritan literature', in Johanna Harris and Alison Searle (eds), *The Puritan literary tradition*, Oxford 2024, 1–17 at pp. 9–11, which is drawn on here, and, for a more wide-ranging account, her 'Biographical dictionaries and their uses', which (at pp. 149, 152, 156) identifies the authorship of initialled articles in the *General dictionary* and in the two editions of *Biographia Britannica*.

[50] *Biographia Britannica*, 1/ii. 563. Campbell takes this detail, with acknowledgement, from Edmund Calamy's *Continuation of the account of the ministers … ejected and silenced after the restoration*, London 1727, ii. 932, a continuation, that is, of the second volume of the second, enlarged, edition (1713) of his redaction of the *Reliquiae* in his 1702 *Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's history of his life and times*: Sir John's legacy 'of a good sum of Money' to students and young ministers was for those 'who were *neither for Domination, nor unnecessary Separation, but of Mr.* Baxter's *Principles*; as Sir *John* was pleas'd to express it'.

[51] *Biographia Britannica*, 2nd edn, ii. 22.

[52] For Coleridge's high regard for Baxter see *RB* i. 117–20.

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While critical of the captious and the petty in Baxter's writings, Coleridge could not sufficiently praise Baxter's patience, charity, acuity, self-awareness and eirenicism, implicitly attributing to him a leadership role in the religious life of the nation when he headed a memorandum 'Presbyterians & Baxterians in the time of Charles 1 and 2nd'.[53] It was, however, Baxter's part in quite another intellectual movement that concerned the Congregational minister and Puritan biographer William Orme in his *The life and times of Richard Baxter* (1830), much the fullest account of Baxter's thought and writings that had yet appeared. Far from seeing in Baxterianism a model for the religious life, Orme judged its effects disastrous. Baxterianism 'had a baneful influence on the Presbyterians' who, 'though at first more rigid in their doctrinal views, and more exclusive in their spirit and system of church government, than the Independents, became before the death of Baxter the more liberal party' and thereafter declined 'into a state of low moderate orthodoxy, in which there was little of the warmth or vitality of evangelical religion':

> The first stage in that deterioration which took place among the Presbyterian dissenters, was generally characterised by the term Baxterianism: a word to which it is difficult to attach a definite meaning. It denotes not a separate sect or party, but rather a system of opinions on doctrinal points, verging towards Arminianism, and which ultimately passed to Arminianism and Socinianism … it is a melancholy fact, that the declension which began even at this early period in the Presbyterian body, went on slowly but surely, till from the most fervid orthodoxy, it finally arrived at the frigid zone of Unitarianism.[54]

There is no mistaking the dismay and disapproval of Orme in his tendentious account of these developments, but putting aside his talk of 'deterioration' and 'declension', historically his summary is essentially correct.[55] Baxter himself, as we have seen, was accused of Arminianism and Socinianism (as well as popery) by his opponents, and Unitarianism did draw on

[53] *The notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, London 1957–62, 1/i [text], 1176. Coburn was mistaken in her suggestion that '*Baxterians* appears to be Coleridge's coinage for that liberal Nonconformity of which Richard Baxter (1615–91) was an eminent representative' (1/ii [notes], n. 1181).

[54] William Orme, *The life and times of Richard Baxter: with a critical examination of his writings*, London 1830, i. 85–6. This biographical and critical study appeared also as the first volume of Orme's twenty-three-volume edition of *The practical works of the Rev. Richard Baxter*, London 1830.

[55] Surveying eighteenth-century developments, Alasdair Raffe takes issue with the notion of 'an inevitable drift to Arminianism among Presbyterians' as a result of the 'powerful support' among Dissenters for 'the Baxterian system': 'The idea of a slippery slope towards heterodoxy was … part of the evangelical reading of Presbyterian history': 'Presbyterians', in Andrew C. Thompson (ed.), *The Oxford history of dissenting traditions*, II: *The long eighteenth century, c.1689–c.1828*, Oxford 2018, 11–29 at pp. 19–21.

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liberal and rational emphases within Presbyterianism.[56] As Presbyterianism moved towards what would become Unitarianism, and Calvinism became the distinctive creed of Congregationalists, adherents of the Baxterian middle way in the second half of the eighteenth century (Doddridge died in 1751) found the gulf increasingly difficult to bridge and generally preferred the Arminian and Unitarian shore. Indeed, at the end of the nineteenth century, the pre-eminent Unitarian historian Alexander Gordon coupled Baxter with Locke as a precursor of rational dissent.[57]

A striking example of this is the occurrence of the word *Baxterian* at a decisive moment in the intellectual and religious development from Congregationalism to Unitarianism of no less a figure than Joseph Priestley (although he only ever described himself as a Socinian[58]). In his *Memoirs*, Priestley recalls that in 1752, when he was nineteen, his attempt to become a communicant at the Congregational Heckmondwike Upper Chapel in the West Riding of Yorkshire was unsuccessful as he was found (chiefly for his views on original sin) not to be sufficiently orthodox. However, the Presbyterian minister

> Mr. [George] Haggerstone, … was a little more liberal than the members of the congregation in which I was brought up, being what is called a *Baxterian;* and his general conversation had a liberal turn … But what contributed to open my eyes still more was the conversation of a Mr. [John] Walker, from Ashton under line, who preached as a candidate when our old minister was superannuated. He was an avowed Baxterian,[59] and being rejected on that account his opinions were much canvassed, and he being a guest at the house of my Aunt [Sarah Keighley], we soon became very intimate, and I thought I saw much of reason in his sentiments. Thinking farther on these subjects, I was, before I went to the Academy, an Arminian.[60]

[56] See H. K. Short, 'Presbyterians under a new name', in Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *English Presbyterians*, 219–86 esp. pp. 219–35.

[57] Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian history*, 31. See also the appended lecture (pp. 56–101) on 'Baxter as a founder of liberal Nonconformity'; cf. Roger Thomas on rationalism and the parallel between Locke and Baxter in Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *English Presbyterians*, 108–12, 137–41, 144–7.

[58] Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian history*, 40.

[59] Priestley described what he called 'the *Baxterian scheme*' as a middle way between Calvinism and Arminianism in his *An history of the corruption of Christianity*, London 1782, i. 324, quoted (approvingly) in Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge*, 2–3.

[60] *Memoirs of Dr Joseph Priestley to the year 1795, written by himself: with a continuation by his son Joseph Priestley*, London 1806, 11–12. The 'academy' was Doddridge's academy, moved to Daventry on his death in 1751, at which Priestley enrolled in November 1752. For this episode and identifications of the persons mentioned see David Wykes, 'Joseph Priestley, minister and teacher', in Isabel Rivers and David Wykes (eds), *Joseph Priestley, scientist, philosopher and theologian*, Oxford 2008, 20–48 at pp. 21–4, and Robert E. Schofield, 'Joseph Priestly (1733–1804)', *ODNB* at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22788> accessed 19 February 2025, and his *The enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1733 to 1773*, University Park, PA 1997, 1–14, 31–5. Priestley's

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Opponents such as the Congregational minister Stephen Lobb had predicted over fifty years before that middle-way men (whom Lobb calls '*Amyraldians*') must inevitably 'slide into' Arminianism and are then 'in the twinkling of Eye, fallen under *Socinus* his Banner'.[61] This Orme would certainly think he saw confirmed in the case of Priestley. From quite a different religious perspective, Sir James Stephen, a leading member of the Evangelical Church of England Clapham Sect, saw no more future for Baxterianism than his contemporary Orme: 'Baxter was opposed to every sect and belonged to none. He can properly be described only as a Baxterian … at once the founder and the single member of an eclectic school, within the portals of which he invited all men, but persuaded none, to take refuge from their mutual animosities.'[62]

## *Coda*

If, however, the desuetude predicted by Kippis lay in store for Baxterianism as a distinctive theological and ecclesiological commitment, it was not, as Kippis had thought, to be 'either wholly forgotten' or its memory 'only preserved in some historical production'.[63] Certainly, as the secondary works cited in this paper have illustrated, *Baxterian* and *Baxterianism* would be preserved in nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical and biographical studies, but *Baxterianism* was not to be confined to historical scholarship. It has continued to be invoked within both dissent and the established Church to denote a distinctive religious temper, moderate, eirenic, liberal, inter-denominational and inclusive, what Baxter would have called catholic, or mere, Christianity. *Mere Christianity* was indeed the phrase C. S. Lewis took up (with acknowledgement to Baxter) to describe what was 'common to nearly all Christians at all times' of whatever denomination, what, in the words of St Vincent de Lérins that Baxter was fond of quoting, 'has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone'.[64] Where Stephen

son Joseph adds a long note in the *Memoirs* on *Baxterians* explaining that Baxter 'attempted a Coalition between the doctrines of Calvin and Arminius': this 'compromising doctrine … may be seen in his very learned and unintelligible work entitled Catholick Theology'.

[61] [Stephen Lobb], *The growth of error: being an exercitation concerning the rise and progress of Arminianism, and more especially Socinianism*, London 1697, 2–3.

[62] James Stephen, *Essays in ecclesiastical biography*, London 1849, ii. 44 (one of two examples of usage given in *OED*). Quite contrary (if no more accurate) had been the assessment of David Bogue and James Bennett, *The history of dissenters, from the revolution to the year 1808*, 2nd edn, London 1833, i. 423: 'Being himself moderate in respect to forms of church government, [Baxter] prevailed on his neighbours, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists to unite with him; and, by his influence, everything was conducted with harmony and love.'

[63] See n. 51 above.

[64] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, London 1952, p. vi; *RB* v. 527.

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had seen in Baxter's thought a self-defeating singularity, Lewis found a unifying catholicity in its focus on the fundamental or essential beliefs '*Constitutiue* of true Religion' regardless of particular confessions, doctrines or liturgical practices.[65] From its origins as a pejorative sobriquet for heterodox individuality and muddled thinking, *Baxterianism* has come to signify a commitment to common fellowship across sectarian divides, which had always been Baxter's aspiration: 'holding communion with all true Christians on the termes of primitive simplicity & Love'.[66]

[65] *RB* ii. 39–41.

[66] *CCRB* ii. 222.

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