

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XVII.—MARCH, 1889.—No. 3.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—RICHARD BAXTER.

By PROF. J. O. MURRAY, D.D., DEAN OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

THE Christian ministry of to-day can ill afford to be unacquainted with the life and works of such men as Richard Baxter. Like John Howe, he has left writings which are a store-house of suggestive thought. Like Milton and De Foe, he has enjoyed the honor of having some of his works publicly burned at Oxford. As a preacher, he has singularly demonstrated the power of the truth to mould and educate the masses. If for nothing else, the story of Baxter's ministry at Kidderminster would make him illustrious as an example of *popular* preaching in the best sense of that much abused phrase. No man more than he has illustrated the inherent moral power of a devoted Christian pastorate. And lastly, no man more than he has shown how study, close, hard study, goes to the making of an effective ministry in its widest reach and longest hold. His mistakes are profitable, for they teach very plainly what should be shunned. To reproduce his ministry would be an anachronism. Each age has its own pulpit, which must speak so as to be heard. The seventeenth century must teach that and not the nineteenth; the nineteenth must speak to that and not to the twentieth. I am not familiar with courses of homiletic training in our theological seminaries, but I can readily see how they might be the gainer from a series of lectures on such ministries as that of Baxter. He was born November 12, 1615, at Eaton Constantine, Shropshire, England. He died December 8, 1691, at London. His life was therefore passed in that stormiest and in some respects greatest period of English history which embraces the reigns of Charles I., Oliver Cromwell, Charles II., and James II. The account he has left in his autobiography of his confirmation would seem to show that he owed little to early religious training. "When I was a school-boy about fifteen years of age, the bishop coming into the county, many went to him to be confirmed. We, that were boys, each went out to see the bishop among the rest, not knowing anything of the meaning of the business. When we came thither, we met about thirty or forty in all, of our own stature and temper, that had

come to be *bishopped*, as it was then called. The bishop examined us, not at all in one article of faith, but in a church-yard; in haste we were set in a rank, and he passed hastily over us, laying his hands on our heads and saying a few words, which neither I nor any that I spoke with understood, so hastily were they uttered, and a very short prayer recited, and there was an end. But whether we were Christians or infidels, or knew so much as that there was a God, the bishop neither knew nor inquired."

Baxter's mental education was hardly more complete. He was at first under the instruction of curates, for whose character he had little respect. His next instructor, "during no less than two years never instructed him one hour, but spent his time, for the most part, in talking against the factious Puritans." He got some classical training from Mr. John Owen, master of the free school at Wroxeter, and from his care went to Mr. Richard Wickstead instead of to the university. Here he got no teaching, but had access to a good library, of which he made faithful use. His dignified reply to Anthony à Wood's captious question as to the place of his education is worth recalling. "As to myself my faults are no disgrace to any university, for I was of none. I have little but what I read out of books and inconsiderable helps of country tutors. Weakness and pain helped me to study how to die; that set me on studying how to live; beginning with necessities I proceeded by degrees, and am now going to see that for which I have lived and studied." The allusion to "weakness and pain" brings out the life-long struggle Baxter had with ill-health. He was always in the hands of the doctors; from first to last no fewer than thirty-six tried their hands upon him. Orme in his biography says: "He was diseased literally from head to foot; his stomach flatulent and acidulous; violent rheumatic headaches; prodigious bleedings at the nose; his blood so thin and acrid that it oozed out from the points of his fingers and kept them often raw and bloody, etc., etc.," and then naively adds: "To be more particular would be disagreeable." Baxter himself says of one of his illnesses: "I was restored by the mercy of God and the help of Dr. Bates, *and the moss of a dead man's skull*, which I had from Dr. Michlethwait." And yet despite this frightful catalogue of diseases and their medical treatment, Baxter lived to write more than a hundred and fifty treatises; to be an army chaplain under Cromwell; to fulfill a long and arduous pastorate at Kidderminster, and to endure imprisonment after a trial before Jeffries.

At the age of eighteen Baxter was recommended to seek employment at the court of Charles I. It sounds odd to hear from his biographer that he was "introduced to Sir Henry Newport, the Master of the Revels, who took him to Whitehall." A month's experience of its gayeties drew from him the verdict: "I had quickly enough of the

Court, when I saw a stage-play instead of a sermon on the Lord's days in the afternoon, and saw what course was there in fashion." Baxter would have made a poor courtier, even had no scruples of conscience troubled him. But this short experience determined him fully as to his career. He turned his whole soul toward the Christian ministry. The pages of his autobiography reveal a steady growth of this great purpose. His preparation for the ministry was already in progress by his studies in scholastic theology. One great English treatise, more than all others, moulded the future Baxter. He mastered the *Ecclesiastical Polity* of Hooker. He might have had a worse training for his work as preacher and theologian than the study of this noble specimen of theological learning and reasoning, in its stately English style. In 1638 he sought ordination at the hands of the Bishop of Worcester, was by him ordained and after brief ministries at Dudley and Bridgworth entered, in 1640, on that ministry at Kidderminster which was to be so remarkable a chapter in his life. For two years he labored among the people, finding the moral and spiritual condition at the lowest ebb. His fidelity and boldness stirred up the enmity of the "baser sort." He was repeatedly mobbed. Meantime the Civil War was on foot. The country was divided. Kidderminster was Loyalist. Baxter never trusted Charles I., and he was thought by his townsmen to sympathize with the decree of Parliament removing all images and crucifixes from the churches. The mob was enraged—his life was threatened, and he was compelled to flee. Thus after two years the work at Kidderminster was suspended, to be resumed in after times. We find him next holding a *quasi*-chaplaincy at Coventry where "he lived in the governor's house, followed his studies as quietly as in a time of peace for about a year, preaching once a week to the soldiers, and once on the Lord's Day to the people, taking nothing from either but my diet."

When "Cromwell lay at Cambridge with that famous troop with which he began his army," the officers proposed to "make their troop a gathered church," and invited Baxter to become its pastor. Baxter disapproved the step and declined the call. Subsequently, however, though leaving his "studies, and friends and quietness of Coventry" with great reluctance, he became the chaplain to Col. Whalley's regiment. Baxter's account of his military chaplaincy in the autobiography is full of lively detail. "I set myself from day to day to find out the corruptions of the soldiers and *dispute them out of their mistakes*,* both religious and political. My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the more respectable." We suspect that the chaplaincy was strongly colored by Baxter's love of polemical debate, too much so for its highest success. It is not to his chaplaincy that we should turn for his best record. It is easy to picture Baxter among Cromwell's soldiers by some camp-fire

* The italics are ours.

holding a long and loud discussion over points in Anti-Nomianism and Armenianism, which he says were rife in the army. He remained in it for two years, and what will always be memorable about it is the fact that he wrote at this time his *Saints' Everlasting Rest*. In 1646 we find him once more at his old post in Kidderminster. There for fourteen years he remained at work among the nailers and weavers. The parish had the best of attraction for a man of such mould—plenty of hard work. His parishioners for the most part were poor, many of them wretchedly so. Vice abounded and, of course, ignorance, the concomitant and effect of vice. The cottagers suffered from being ill-fed and ill-housed. In fact, Kidderminster presented every problem for the gospel to solve and Baxter grappled with it manfully and successfully. It is very doubtful whether there exists any illustration of the power of the gospel to redeem and elevate a whole community more suggestive than this ministry at Kidderminster. To parallel it we must go to the field of foreign missions. It deserves a special study from the ministry of to-day in our larger cities, many of whom are so earnestly grappling with the same problems that confronted Baxter. They will gain impetus and practical knowledge from his record of the patient and heroic ministry there. "In a word," he says, "when I came thither, there was about one family in a street that worshiped God; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not one poor family that did not do so; and that did not, by professing sincere Godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And in those families which were the worst, being inns and ale-houses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious."

The methods by which he accomplished such results were first of all his preaching. "The congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build *five galleries* after my coming thither, the church being very capacious and the most commodious and convenient I ever was in."

But to preaching was added pastoral labor, such as the following: "Two days every week, my assistant and myself took fourteen families between us for private catechising and confirming, he going through the parish and the town coming to me. . . . Every Thursday evening my neighbors who were most desirous and had opportunity met at my house, and there one of them repeated the sermon [of the previous Sunday]; afterward, they proposed whatever doubts any of them had about the sermon or any other case of conscience, and I resolved their doubts." It would be interesting to know what results would follow, if the ministry of the present day should give their parishioners such a chance to propose whatever doubts any of them had about the sermon.

Baxter looked just as carefully after the physical well-being of his pastoral charge. He had some knowledge of medicine, and for five or six years practiced physic. "Because I never once took a penny of

any one, I was crowded with patients, so that almost twenty would be at my doors at once." Indeed the work became so onerous that in self-defense he procured a godly, diligent physician to come and live in the town, to whom he turned over this part of his ministry. He gave away in charity not only much of his income from the parish, £80 and sometimes £90 per annum; the income from his books, some £60 or £80 a year, was also distributed. "I took," he says, "the aptest of their children from the school, and sent divers of them to the universities, where for eight pounds a year, or ten at most, by the help of my friends, I maintained them. Some of them are honorable ministers now out at work with their brethren." He gave away books as well as money. "Of some small books I gave each family one, which came to about eight hundred (from which we have incidentally the size of the parish) . . . and every family that was poor and had not a Bible, I gave a Bible." Thus centuries before Bible or Tract or Education Societies, Baxter was his own Bible and Tract and Education Society. But the most significant comment Baxter makes on his Kidderminster pastorate in the autobiography is perhaps this. We commend it to the consideration of our readers in this age of shifting pastorates, unemployed parishes and vacant ministers. "Finally it much furthered my success that I stayed still in this one place near two years before the wars and above fourteen years after. . . . It was a good advantage to me to have almost all the religious people of the place of my own instructing and reproving, . . . and that I stayed to see them grow up to some confirmedness and maturity." If to all this we add, that during this period Baxter wrote some sixty of his treatises, we shall realize what his work was. Among them was the *Call to the Unconverted*, and his *Gildas Salvianus, the Reformed Pastor*. Both these works bear the glorious impress of this remarkable ministry.

It would be an interesting task to survey closely the remainder of Baxter's life; to detail his correspondence with Eliot, the apostle to the Indians; to depict his final separation from the Church of England after Charles II. had offered him a bishopric; to unfold his lectures as a Non-Conforming preacher in London after he had been refused his old parish at Kidderminster, and to describe the ejection of the two thousand Non-Conformists from their livings, among whom was Baxter, on that second St. Bartholomew's day, August 24, 1662. The closing years of his life were full of labors, but full also of vicissitudes, sufferings, poverty, and imprisonment. Along with Howe and Bunyan, Baxter refused to accept the Act of Indulgence craftily offered by James II., for which all subsequent lovers of liberty have praised him. Of his arrest, imprisonment, and trial before the infamous Jeffries, it is best to seek the story in Macaulay's brilliant pages. If any reader of this REVIEW has not already done so,

let him take down Macaulay's "History" and read it straightway there.

Baxter died December 8, 1691, and in his funeral sermon, Dr. Bates summed up his claims on our regard in a judgment from which few will dissent that "he should be venerated as the leader of the noble army of Non-Conformist confessors." That Baxter's works are now little studied there is every reason to think. "Which of Baxter's works shall I read?" Boswell is reported to have asked Dr. Johnson. "Read them all, they are all excellent," was the reply. So, too, Dr. Isaac Bonner wittily said of Baxter, that "his practical writings were never mended and his controversial ones seldom refuted." These men were not mistaken in their judgments. Baxter will repay close study of him to-day. Some of his writings are of course out of date. But some are surprisingly *in* date, and of these we mean to speak. Baxter is popularly known by his *Saint's Rest* and his *Call to the Unconverted*. The abridged edition of the former gives no idea of what the venerable folio is as a work of masterly power. Of his autobiography too much can hardly be said as a faithful record and striking picture of those stirring times.

The work of his to which it is the design of this article to call attention is his "Christian Directory; or, a Sum of Practical Theology and Cases of Conscience." It was written when for not subscribing he was forbidden to preach. It is the largest of all his works and in many respects the most characteristic. As arranged by Baxter, it discusses Christian Ethics, or private duties; Christian Economics, or family duties; Christian Ecclesiastics, or church duties; Christian Politics, or duties to rulers and neighbors. During the Kidderminster ministry Baxter found that the only way to rouse in his parishioners any sense of sinfulness was by bringing home to their consciences concrete cases of wrongdoing. He followed out this plan in the "Christian Directory." In other words, Baxter's preaching and writing were largely *ethical*. His times demanded it. So do ours. It is urged against this, that this is not *gospel preaching*. But the failure to waken the sense of sin, which *must precede* all true acceptance of Christ, comes from want of close dealing with the American conscience of the year of our Lord 1889. Take, for example, the business practices of to-day. Take the stock gambling, the gambling in wheat, the gambling in pretty much everything; take the political courses, which are immoral; take the lax morals, and see what a field for *ethical* teaching. There must be some true idea of conscience. Baxter in his "Directory" is careful to have well established views on this point. He insists with force and point on the responsibility for a true conscience. What is needed often is quite as much change of conscience as a change of heart. How does it come about that the moral sense of American Christians is so apathetic over this enormous evil of stock, and specially of wheat gambling?

A study of Baxter's "Directory" would help our ministers to utterance on this subject. Besides, there comes in every community a time when there is a confusion of moral distinctions. It is a great thing for a minister to understand how to resolve cases of conscience, or, in other words, to clear up moral distinctions. Why is it wrong to deal in "futures"? What makes it of the nature of gambling? What, in fact, is the sin of gambling? Is betting wrong, and why? These are illustrations of a round of moral questions which it is for the public to answer. Our Chairs of Moral Philosophy may deal with them, for aught I know. But they need discussion on a far wider arena. If we turn to the "Christian Directory," Part II., Christian Economics, chapter ix, we find Baxter discussing questions like this: How far may a wife give without her husband's consent? Is a wife guilty of her husband's unlawful getting, if she keep it? Does adultery dissolve marriage? Is the injured person *bound* to divorce the other or left free? Many of these questions smack too much of Romish casuistry, perhaps. All that we affirm is, that a study of the "Christian Directory" will give any minister some idea of the great importance of making clear moral distinctions. Tirades against novel reading do little good. There is an innocent and a guilty use of novels. Denunciations of men who deal in stocks are silly. A man may buy and sell stocks as honestly as teas or silks, yet if we were asked at this moment where a clean and full exposé of the wrong in stock-gambling could be found, we should not be able to point to any sermon or treatise, but to an article in *Harper's Weekly* some years since. And it strikes the writer with amazement, that the gambling in bread-stuffs has not long before this roused the moral indignation of the community to a pitch which would have compelled laws suppressing it, or if this be not possible, which would have suppressed it by its own inherent power. There are sins which we dare not commit in daylight. Much of Richard Baxter's dealing with these ethical questions will seem trivial, but he had the right idea, viz.: that pulpit teaching must learn how to grapple with them. The Sermon on the Mount is the gospel, in part. Baxter's "Christian Directory" was an attempt to bring that down upon the conscience of England. We need to have this done upon the conscience of American people in some more vigorous fashion, if we are to keep up the semblance of a decent respect for the Ten Commandments.

II.—THE RITES, CEREMONIES AND CUSTOMS OF THE JEWS.

BY REV. B. PICK, PH.D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

IN his preface to the "Mighty Hand" or *Yad ha-hazaka*, the celebrated Moses Maimonides, or the second Moses as he is called by the Jews, writes thus: "The number of the precepts of the law is 613, of